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**The Problem of National Identity within the German Armies
during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71.**

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2013

Supervised by Dr Tim Grady

**This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree MA in
Military History.**

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NOTE ON TRANSLATION OF QUOTES IN GERMAN

Quotations from German documents have been given in the original in the text of the dissertation; however, a translation into English is given immediately following the reference in the footnote.

All translations from German primary sources or secondary literature are those of the author of this dissertation.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends who always patiently support me.

INTRODUCTION

The German Wars of Unification between 1864 and 1871, which united the North German Confederation with the southern states, received only limited academic attention overall. Historians throughout Europe, more so in Germany, engaged primarily with political and military aspects of the conflicts whereby they focused strongly on Prussia and rarely accounted for other German states. In the field of cultural and social history, however, there is a significant lack of publications. Despite the historical importance of these wars, especially the Franco-Prussian War, the subject is often overshadowed by the global, more multifarious conflicts of the twentieth century which aroused the interest of academics. Therefore, research in this field is far from exhausted and the topic offers much room for further investigation.

In English-speaking countries, the post-1945 general literature on the German Wars of Unification is limited.¹ Although Prussia's wars of 1864, 1866 and 1870-71 have received some treatment, it is evident that the wars were more of political rather than military interest to historians.² The existence of only two major publications in English language on the most important of these wars, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71, indicates this lack of interest outside Germany; both Michael Howard and Geoffrey Wawro have presented a general history of the war from the military perspective. In Germany, on the other hand, academic

¹ The most important English works on warfare in the German Wars of Unification are: Arden Bucholz, *Moltke and the German wars, 1864-1871* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Philipp Elliot-Wright (ed.), *Gravelotte-St. Privat, 1870: End of the Second Empire* (Oxford: OUP, 2000); Stig Förster & Jörg Nagler (eds.), *On the Road to Total War. The American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification, 1861-1871* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997); Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War* (London: Harper Collins, 1961); Dennis Showalter, *The Wars of German Unification* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004); Geoffrey Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War: Austria's War with Prussia and Italy in 1866* (New York: CUP, 1997); Geoffrey Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Conquest of France in 1870-71* (New York: CUP, 2003).

² Works in English language were published on the political problems the German Wars of Unification had posed: Lynn Abrams, *Bismarck and the German Empire 1871-1918* (London: Routledge, 2006); David Hargreaves, *Bismarck and German Unification* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991); Joseph Vince Fuller, *Bismarck's Diplomacy at its Zenith* (Cambridge: CUP, 1922); David G. Williamson, *Bismarck and Germany, 1862-1890* (London: Longman, 1998).

interest in this field had been greater and works had been produced particularly in anniversary years of the war. Yet, despite the immense importance of the war for the history of Germany, a surprisingly limited number of works in German had been published in the period between 1945 to 1990.

After 1990, the Franco-Prussian War began to arouse increasing interest among German academics; the variety of unexamined facets this war offered attracted not only military historians, but also sociologists and economic historians. The primary goal of the Prussian military system, the indoctrination of discipline and obedience through hard drill and training, doubtlessly secured the victories of 1866 and 1870/71; it is certainly not surprising that many historians were keen on examining how the Prussians managed to produce the most disciplined and well-trained army in Europe at the time.³ Additionally, Prussian war planning and leadership, especially the style of warfare of its operational mastermind, Chief of General Staff Helmuth von Moltke, evoked academic attention.⁴

Other German historians, who had repeatedly raised the topic of national thinking in their works, however, had devoted thoughts to less military subjects.⁵ Nikolaus Buschmann considers the role of heroism and patriotism in the Prussian military system and Heidi

³ Siegfried Fiedler, *Kriegswesen und Kriegsführung im Zeitalter der Einigungskriege* (Bonn: Bernard & Graefe, 1991), pp. 114-121; see also Ursula von Gersdorff & Wolfgang Groote (eds.), *Entscheidung 1870. Der Deutsch-Französische Krieg* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1970); Ingrid Mayershofer, *Bevölkerung und Militär in Bamberg 1860-1923: Eine bayerische Stadt und der preußisch-deutsche Militarismus* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2010); Dierk Walter, *Preußische Heeresreformen, 1807-1870* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2003).

⁴ Fiedler, *Kriegswesen und Kriegsführung*; Dierk Walter, 'Roon, the Prussian Landwehr, and the Reorganization of 1859-1860', *War in History*, 16/3 (2009), pp. 269-297.

⁵ Werner Bührer, *Volksreligiosität und Kriegserleben: Bayerische Soldaten im Deutsch-Französischen Krieg 1870/71* (Münster: Boll, 1997); Harald Lönnecker, *Studenten und der Krieg 1870/71* (Frankfurt: Ares, 2009); Wencke Meteling, *Ehre, Einheit, Ordnung. Preußische und französische Städte und ihre Regimenter im Krieg, 1870/71 und 1914-1918* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2010); Thomas Rohkrämer, *Der Militarismus der „kleinen Leute“: Die Kriegervereine im deutschen Kaiserreich 1871-1914* (München: Oldenbourg, 1990); Alexander Seyferth, *Die Heimatfront 1870/71: Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft im Deutsch-Französischen Krieg* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2007).

Mehrkens focused more on national thinking and the medical treatment the wounded soldiers received in the Franco-Prussian War.⁶

Similarly, in regard to publications on German national identity, two major periods can be identified, where there was an evidently high level of academic interest in German regionalism and nationalism. The first wave of publications occurred in the immediate aftermath of the 1870/71 conflict and lasted until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.⁷ In this time, the unification had triggered particularly overwhelming national sentiments which resulted in the production of large quantities of heroic literature. Mainly memoirs, written by officers and veterans, displayed the Franco-Prussian War as a ‘national’ war fought for the cause of German unity. However, these sources featured frequent bias opinion whereby the real experiences were often obscured.

The second major upsurge of publications came in the 1990s and the twenty-first century coinciding with the collapse of Communism in East Germany and the fall of the Berlin Wall, reigniting historical interest in unification. With this second unification of Germany, historians began to recognise the potential and importance of the original in 1871 for a better understanding and explanation of three key themes: the emergence nationalism as a political belief in the nineteenth century; state-building and nationhood; and national and regional identity.⁸ In this period, publications began to appear considering not only the

⁶ Nikolaus Buschmann, *Einkreisung und Waffenbruderschaft: Die öffentliche Deutung von Krieg und Nation in Deutschland 1850-1870* (Tübingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), p. 142; Heidi Mehrkens, *Statuswechsel: Kriegserfahrung und nationale Wahrnehmung im Deutsch-Französischen Krieg 1870/71* (Essen: Klartext, 2008).

⁷ Various memoirs and diaries had been published in this period, which glorified the conduct of the Wars of Unification. For example, Ludwig Diestelkamp, *Freuden und Leiden eines geistlichen freiwilligen Krankenpflegers im glorreichen Feldzug des Jahres der Gnade 1870* (Gütersloh: n.p., 1871); Vincenz Stubenrauch, *Erinnerungen eines bayerischen Kanoniers im Krieg 1870/71* (München: Stubenrauch, 1896); Friedrich Freudenthal, *Von Stade bis Gravelotte* (Bremen: n.p., 1898); Hans Wachenhusen, *Vom ersten bis zum letzten Schuss, Kriegserinnerungen 1870/71* (New York: n.p., 1898); Leonard von Blumenthal, *Tagebücher des Generalfeldmarschalls Graf von Blumenthal aus den Jahren 1866 und 1870/71* (Stuttgart: Blumenthal, 1902); Adolf Matthias, *Meine Kriegserinnerungen* (München: Beck, 1912).

⁸ Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Hagen Schulze, *The Course of German Nationalism: From Frederick the Great to Bismarck, 1763-1867* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991); John Breuilly, *The State of Germany. The National Idea in the Making*,

Prussian state, but historians developed increasing interest in the other German states. The unification experience of states such as Bavaria and Württemberg suddenly became popular.⁹

Highly relevant contributions to the historiography on this subject had been made by Alon Confino and Abigail Green.¹⁰ In his book, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor*, Confino covered largely unexplored ground. Due to its political predominance in nineteenth-century Germany, most historians tend to focus on Prussia as the prime example of German national identity; Confino, however, devoted central attention to the south-western German state of Württemberg. What makes his study particularly useful is that he concentrated on how regional identities transformed into national sentiments after the unification, exploring the symbolic meaning of Sedan Day and the idea of *Heimat* in Württemberg in the context of German nationhood. Abigail Green investigated in a similar area. With *Fatherlands*, she produced a study of state-building in Germany focusing primarily on the states of Hanover, Saxony and also Württemberg; this publication displays a unique example in the historiography for it compares three non-Prussian states contrary to the common fashion of focusing on a single one.

Unmaking and Remaking of a Modern Nation State (London: Longman, 1992); Helmut Berding, *Nationales Bewusstsein und kollektive Identität* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1994); Wolfram Siemann, *Vom Staatenbund zum Nationalstaat. Deutschland 1806-1871* (München: Beck, 1995); Dieter Langewiesche, *Nation, Nationalismus, Nationalstaat in Deutschland und Europa* (München: Beck, 2000); Harold James, *A German identity: 1770 to the Present Day* (London, Phoenix Press, 2000); Jörg Echternkamp & Sven Oliver Müller (eds.), *Die Politik der Nation. Deutscher Nationalismus in Krieg und Krisen 1760-1960* (München: Oldenbourg, 2002); Stefan Berger, *The Search for Normality. National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Germany since 1800* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003); Heinrich August Winkler, *Germany. The Long Road West 1789-1933* (Oxford: OUP, 2006); Nancy R. Reagan, *Sweeping the German Nation: Domesticity and National Identity in Germany, 1870-1945* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007); Hans A. Pohlson, *National Monuments and Nationalism in 19th Century Germany* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2008).

⁹ Werner Bergmann, *Bayerns Anteil am Feldzug gegen Preußen im Sommer des Jahres 1866* (Kirchenlamitz: Historische Sammlung Bergmann, 1990); Manfred Hanisch, *Für Fürst und Vaterland. Legitimitätsstiftung in Bayern zwischen Revolution 1848 und deutscher Einheit* (München: Oldenbourg, 1991); Friedmann Schmoll, *Verewigte Nation, Studien zur Erinnerungskultur von Reich und Einzelstaat im württembergischen Denkmalkult des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Silberburg Verlag, 1995); Renata Greguric, *Die Haltung Bayerns zur "deutschen Frage" zwischen 1866 und 1870* (München: Grin Verlag, 2005); Annette Schießl, *Bayern und die Reichsgründung 1870/71* (München: Grin Verlag, 2007); Ingrid Mayershofer, *Bevölkerung und Militär in Bamberg 1860-1923: Eine bayerische Stadt und der preußisch-deutsche Militarismus* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2010).

¹⁰ Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor. Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Abigail Green, *Fatherlands. State-Building and Nationhood in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004).

In addition to the secondary literature dealing with this time period, there is a great deal of primary material available in support of gaining a better understanding of events at the time. The most relevant of these are letters, correspondence cards and diaries written at the time by the German troops. Most of these sources are in excellent condition up until today thanks to archival preservation. This is especially true for collections of letters or diaries because they had been kept in private possession and maintained in good condition by the authors' relatives. The majority of existing private accounts of the troops that fought in the Franco-Prussian War can be found in German archives; the largest collections are held by the *Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv* in Freiburg, the *Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv* in Munich and the *Hauptstaatsarchiv* in Stuttgart.

These sources describe first-hand wartime experience, giving insight into soldiers' views, attitudes, sentiments, adventures, and encounters with enemy forces; and, above all, they had been little affected by governmental censorship. However, it is here where one has to carefully evaluate the origin of the source. Despite the fact that each source represented authentic and personal attitudes of its author, certain differences can be found depending on the social background and rank of the author. For example, the officer rank was granted only to highly educated men drawn from the middle class or the aristocracy. They, therefore, featured, for example, a broader understanding of politics which they often shared in letters to their families. Letters of the ordinary conscript soldiers, however, rather concentrated on material needs. Moreover, due to their social background, they had received only limited education. In many accounts written by ordinary soldiers, a lack of sufficient writing skills was evident so they tended to make use of *Feldpostkarten* (correspondence cards) or had their letter written by comrades.¹¹ There was also still a striking amount of ordinary soldiers who

¹¹ Frank Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten im Krieg von 1870/71. Eine Darstellung der Situation und der Erfahrungen der deutschen Soldaten im Deutsch-Französischen Krieg* [Online]. Available: <http://frankkuehlich.de/dissertation.htm>, part I., sect. 4.2. [no pagination].

were unable to read and write; particularly the Prussian provinces eastwards of the river Oder featured a high illiteracy rate.¹²

The archives also provide access to printed primary material such as contemporary newspapers, governmental papers and pamphlets; all of which carry significant information about a variety of factors that are relevant for both the research background and the contents of this dissertation. In the war of 1870/71 the media gained in significance in terms of public opinion shaping utilising newspapers and other printed sources for the conveyance of national sentiments.¹³ The media itself had been influenced strongly by the government at the time. The governments of the various German states had introduced measures during the war to ensure civilians were informed about war events. For example, in Saxony, all newspapers were obliged to print announcements of the royal ministries free of charge.¹⁴ Newspapers and pamphlets displayed one significant instrument of institutions to manipulate public opinion and bared insight into official censorship as information had been carefully selected by the government.

There is a lack of available Prussian governmental papers as a result of Allied air raids in World War II leading to the destruction of most Prussian official documents. However, the *Staatsbibliothek* in Berlin still hold samples of the *Militär-Wochenblatt*, a frequently read newspaper during the war. In regard to printed sources from other German states and regions, research had been far more successful; archives in Stuttgart and Munich hold a vast selection of well-preserved contemporary published documents. Moreover, the internet offers a great deal of digitised primary material which can be easily accessed via the websites of German universities, libraries, or newspaper archives.¹⁵

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Mehrkens, *Statuswechsel*, p. 22.

¹⁴ Seyferth, *Die Heimatfront*, p. 371.

¹⁵ A selection of resourceful websites: The University of Bonn, *Digital Library* [Online]. Available: <http://s2w.hbz-nrw.de/ulbbn/periodical/titleinfo/429523>; Bayerische Landesbibliothek, *Digital Library* [Online].

This dissertation is seeking to investigate the extent to which national identity was already evident in the hearts and minds of the German troops that fought in the Franco-Prussian War. Before describing the methods and structure, it is necessary to clarify and define basic terms which appear throughout this work. The central pillar forms the term ‘identity’ which describes the unique characteristics determining who or what a person is and distinguishing this person from others.¹⁶ Applied to the Germany of the nineteenth century, a patchwork of many sovereign states and provinces, the importance of the identification with the region had occupied a far greater place in peoples’ lives than it can be said for national identity.

The connection of the Germans to their regions and provinces of origins is expressed in the term ‘*Heimat*’. Sociologists and social psychologists have attempted to answer the question ‘What is *Heimat*?’ and have concluded that *Heimat* is where one is born, where one receives an education, comes to consciousness of selfhood, adjusts oneself to family and society, or constructs a ‘social entity’.¹⁷ The word *Heimat* has ancient German roots has been identifiably present in various German dialects since the fifteenth century, but it was as late as the eighteenth century that the small elite of writers and publicists started to infrequently use the word, although without particular significance.¹⁸ As part of a broad effort in the 1780s to restore ancient and neglected words to the language, early Romantic writers recommended the adoption of *Heimat* and began to incorporate it into their vocabulary.¹⁹ For almost two centuries, regional identities had been persistent in Germany and *Heimat* has been at the

Available: <http://www.bayerische-landesbibliothek-online.de/coburger-zeitung1>; Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, *Teltower Wochenblatt* [Online]. Available: <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/list/title/zdb/25128437/>; The Internet Archive, *Published Primary Documents, Franco-Prussian War 1870/71* [Online]. Available: <http://archive.org/search.php?query=franco-prussian%20war%201870%2F71>.

¹⁶ Sara Hawker, & Catherine Soanes (eds.), *Compact Oxford English Dictionary for Students* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), p. 501.

¹⁷ Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials*, p. 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

centre of a German moral discourse about place, belonging, and identity.²⁰ Whereas *Heimat* before the German Unification of 1871 described the immediate, local, surrounding areas people had lived in, it gained in importance on a national level after the Franco-Prussian War.

The Germans had difficulties in creating a common ‘national identity’, the identity of the German people within one German nation, prior to unification. They struggled to find a stereotype in religion, because of the confessional division between a largely Protestant north-east, and a largely Catholic west and south-east and, politically, there had been weakness and fragmentation between the various states.²¹ According to the early advocates of the national idea, the Germans had to build a nation by appealing to the twin forces of culture and history, which in turn became the backbone of German national identity.²² From the eighteenth century onwards, the idea of the nation had been a popular subject amongst the small elite group of intellectuals. Humanist historians such as Beatus Rhenanus or Jacob Wimpfeling wrote national histories aimed at glorifying the German nation in which they sought to demonstrate that the Germans had much to be proud of.²³ These national sentiments had laid the basis for what became known as German nationalism.

In German history, nationalism aimed at the creation of a unified nation accompanied by the construction of a ‘national state’.²⁴ German nationalism featured a blend of two essential elements: firstly, the myth of a nationally interpreted, glorified past; and secondly, the myth of a nation with an even more glorious future.²⁵ Hereby, the ‘nation’ was based on the cultural roots of nationhood such as a collective name, language, myth of descent,

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

²¹ James, *A German Identity*, p. 10.

²² Berger, *The Search for Normality*, p. 9.

²³ Ibid., p. 22.

²⁴ Hans-Ulrich Wehler, ‘Nationalismus und Nation in der deutschen Geschichte’, in Berding, Helmut (ed.), *Nationales Bewußtsein und kollektive Identität. Studien zur Entwicklung des kollektiven Bewußtseins in der Neuzeit 2* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), p. 163.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 167.

religion, history and so on.²⁶ It seems questionable, however, whether an intensified awareness of a common language and culture could alone provide the motive spring for German nationalism in the early nineteenth century.²⁷ The 'nation' is a fluid concept that changes its meaning in accordance with the particular variant of nationalism it endorses; it is, therefore impossible to fix on a definite definition of the word 'nation'.²⁸ In Germany, where cultural identity had coexisted for centuries with multiple regional, local and religious identities, the relationship between nationalism and 'pre-national' loyalties and identities had been vague.²⁹ It is evident that, although initially hesitant, the German Unification of 1871 acted as a national catharsis providing a basis for national identity and a piece of common history for the German population.³⁰

As it has been explored above, there is a great deal of literature available concentrating on German national thinking, the emergence of nationalism, the concept of *Heimat* that are relevant to the time period covered in this dissertation. The Franco-Prussian War and the subsequent unification of Germany, occurring within a single year (1870/71), offer a great deal of academically unexplored facets, including the creation of national identity amongst the German troops. In the field of German national identity in this era, contributions had been made by few historians. Particularly, the consequences and impact of the unification upon the German populations had been examined. Besides the previously mentioned publications by Alon Confino, Celia Applegate and Abigail Green, one of the core texts used in this dissertation is Heidi Mehrken's *Statuswechsel*, in which she pointed out the changing statuses soldiers experienced during the war and emphasising the factors responsible for the perception of national thinking. In addition, a unique contribution had been made by Frank

²⁶ Green, *Fatherlands*, p. 2.

²⁷ Robert M. Berdahl, Robert M., 'New Thoughts on German Nationalism', *The American Historical Review*, 77/1 (Feb., 1972), p. 69.

²⁸ Green, *Fatherlands*, p. 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Kühlich. In his work on the German troops' wartime experiences, he provided a detailed analysis of how ordinary soldiers interacted with other contingents.

In an attempt to demonstrate how differently national identity had been perceived amongst the German troops, dependent upon social backgrounds and state of origin, special emphasis will be placed upon the troops from Bavaria, Prussia and Württemberg in this dissertation. All three states featured fundamentally different regional cultures and traditions, thus, comparisons can be drawn. Particularly, in the field of military traditions, a great deal of dissimilarities can be found; the military background of each of these states is of importance, influencing the way certain contingents fought in the war, for it also represented an inherent part of regional customs. Furthermore, it will be important to consider the consequences of the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 as it hindered some troops, particularly the Bavarians, to fully comprehend the idea of fighting alongside Prussia in 1870/71.

Moreover, a comparative study of these three states displays a unique contribution to existing literature on the subject. It adds a different dimension to research in this field for it will deal not merely with the experiences of whole societies, but specifically with the perceptions of the troops. The topic examines a narrow aspect of one under researched subject in German history, conducting a comprehensive analysis of the extent to which a national identity began to unite the German armies in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71 that can be placed within the context of existing publications. The central pillar represents the troops' views and attitudes towards each other and whether they had been able to identify with a German nation as a consequence of the war they fought. Thus, the research topic involves a combination of military, social and cultural aspects in order to highlight different angles of the problem and benefit the understanding of the development of a common German national identity after unification.

Throughout this dissertation, the author attempts to answer the following questions in order to clarify the Problem of National Identity within the German Armies during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71: 1) What was the role of regional identity in wartime experience? 2) Which factors encouraged national thinking? 3) What were the external influences upon the troops' national understanding? These questions will be answered in three separate chapters based on the evaluation of primary material, including letters, diaries, correspondence cards and newspapers provided by the archives in Berlin, Freiburg, Munich, Stuttgart, and the University of Bonn. This seems a logical sequence of analysis, beginning with a closer perspective involving the troops' experience, which then gradually expands as the chapters progress, looking at the wider picture of the troops' perceptions and national sentiments and eventually the troops' legacy and subsequent ramifications of the war.

The first chapter discusses the first-hand experiences, troops' relations and wartime routine. While examining the troops' relations and interactions with each other and identifying possible problems in their social behaviour during the war, it will be also necessary to particularly explore the relations between the different contingents and how they dealt with subordination to Prussian commanders. Their cooperation with the Prussians and the apparent difficulties the troops from Bavaria and Württemberg had faced due to their origin will also be examined. Hereby, it will be important to explore the existence of any noticeable discriminations, prejudices or reputations allocated to certain contingents. The second part of the chapter will then focus on the regional traditions that were expressed by the troops. Social and cultural activities, including the singing of marching songs, the performing of artistic and physical activities, they had enjoyed in their spare time off the battlefield often affected their war motivation and attitudes and represented elements of their civilian lives.

The second chapter will focus on the wider perspective of the possible emergence of a 'national identity' as a development of wartime events. Hereby, it is essential to point out

which factors contributed to the development of national thoughts in the mind-sets of the German troops during the war and how this affected their attitudes. Particular elements that highlighted and influenced the troops' thoughts about their own national character will be examined: mobilisation and the creation of a common enemy. In order to examine the extent to which national identity had already taken root in the mind-sets of the troops in the mobilisation phase, the first section will deal with the troops' mood at the outbreak of war including the spirit at the time of mobilisation and the enthusiasm for volunteering. Hereby, it will be important to explore the differences and similarities in the mobilisation process and the general mood of citizens as an influence upon troops. The second section will focus on how the creation of an enemy image aided the strengthening of national belief. Most relevantly, the view the German troops held of the enemy and how the creation of a common 'national' enemy had influenced national identity.

The third chapter will focus upon the extent to which the perception of the war had changed and what measures were taken by the government and media in order to forge national sentiments amongst the troops and how this had influenced the troops' national thinking. Moreover, it will be highlighted how the war had been displayed in soldiers' memories and, in return, how the dead had been displayed in the aftermath of the war. After the final peace settlement on 10 May 1871, the writing of memoirs became a popular exercise amongst war veterans who felt to share their experiences with the public.

The Franco-Prussian War represented a prime example of how actual wartime experience had been transformed by the media and government in order to foster national sentiments amongst the regionally dissected German population. However, memories are not a mere reflection of the recruits' battlefield experience; the gratification about positive events, such as the German Unification on 18 January 1871 and the following armistice on 26 January, played a key part in the blurring of actual experiences. Some historians have pointed

out that the foreseeable unification had been an important tool utilised by the media and government at the time in order to encourage national thinking.³¹ However, what was the contribution of all these factors in the creation of a common sense of ‘Germanness’ amongst the disparate German armies that fought in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71?

I. THE ROLE OF REGIONAL IDENTITY IN WARTIME EXPERIENCE

In order to examine the role of regional identity and how it had affected the disparate German armies who fought in the Franco Prussian War of 1870/71, close attention has to be drawn towards the troops’ relations, wartime routine and experience. This chapter will focus on the troops’ relations and interactions with each other and the identification of problems in their social behaviour during the war. Hereby, it will be necessary to particularly explore the relations of the different contingents and how they dealt with subordination to Prussian commanders. How did they cooperate with the Prussians or where there any difficulties soldiers from the southern states had faced due to their origin? Were there any noticeable discriminations, prejudices or reputations allocated to certain contingents? In the second part, it will be highlighted how regional traditions were expressed by the troops through certain social and cultural activities, including the singing of marching songs, the performing of artistic and physical activities in their spare time off the battlefield and how this affected their war motivation and attitudes.

When investigating the relations between the troops, Frank Kühlich identified four main types: the relation between the troops amongst themselves; the relation of the different units and regiments among themselves; the relation of the troops to officers; and the relation of the

³¹ Mehrkens, *Statuswechsel*, p. 19.

troops to the supreme leadership.³² Possibly, it can be suggested that it was in the first two of these relations where the practicing of regional traditions would have been most common. Although, some of the wartime letters, which had been examined for this work, provided insight into relations between ordinary soldiers and high ranking officers, it is questionable to what extent they can be viewed as viable sources for regional identity in practice.

In placing emphasis upon values such as order, discipline and respect, the hierarchical system and structures within the German armies at the time ultimately relied upon the subordination of the regular troops to high ranks. Thus, in the German Wars of Unification, troops of remotely similar ranks were most likely to gather in social groups and simultaneously experienced their wartime routine; hereby, it is also likely that soldiers from the same region had come together in small groups to socialise, as it applied to regiment units, because they shared a common regional connection. It was in these groups where social and cultural wartime activities would have created a more comfortable environment for troops in which they were able to practise regional customs to a greater extent than it was the case in company of high ranking officials.

Relations amongst the ordinary troops represented the most intimate level of interaction due to the regular basis upon which the soldiers were a part of each other's daily life. It became evident that a social hierarchy emerged amongst the troops themselves; hence, the social groups they had created in wartime had reflected, to a large extent, those found in civil life. The statuses and hierarchies were dependent upon the social status each individual soldier possessed in peacetime civilian life including their occupations and background. So it was common that, amongst the ordinary troops, 'one-year volunteers' saw themselves for having certain privileges.³³ The presence of 'one-year-volunteers' had maintained the

³² Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*.

³³ One-year volunteers had been drawn largely from the educated middle class. The basic requirement for volunteering had been a certificate to prove the conclusion of some form of higher education. For more

hierarchal order amongst smaller groups during the war. These volunteers mainly distinguished themselves from other conscripts in terms of level of education, communicational and social manners, all of these factors had been eminent in civil life.³⁴

The social differences that were carried onto the battlefield, in combination with the limited space in which the troops had cohabited, often led to difficulties and tensions between volunteers and conscripts. It was not unusual that these factors had created a 'superiority complex' held by the volunteers over their fellow soldiers. Apart from an immense lack of individual privacy, the volunteers believed that, due to their superior social status, they were allowed increased material wealth and certain privileges over their lower ranked comrades. One example for this displayed the fact that some volunteers employed 'poorer' conscripts for menial tasks, including cleaning, as it was common in peace time.³⁵ However, often it was mentioned that it was difficult to find soldiers to fulfil these tasks due to the devaluing desire for money during the war.³⁶ In contrast, the volunteers' arrogant behaviour was perceived by the conscripts as a sign of weakness and cowardice, while on the other hand the conscripts were discriminated for their lack of education.³⁷ Generally, these condescending views the 'one-year-volunteers' had expressed towards the conscripts can be attributed to the social hierarchy and the system of values as it was found in most German states of the nineteenth century. It is questionable, therefore, that such discriminations amongst ordinary troops had been the result of regional dissimilarities.

In addition, differences in communication and social behaviour had imposed certain barriers for the conscripts. Men from lower social classes had often featured limited experience and education. The majority of soldiers came from rural villages where they spent

information on voluntary army service during the Franco-Prussian War see Mayershofer, *Bevölkerung und Militär*, pp. 160-161.

³⁴ Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 3.2., [no pagination].

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

a monotonous life which significantly lacked excitement and adventures; their familiar environment often enclosed only a few miles of the areas which surrounded their villages.³⁸ In comparison to troops from the educated middle class, ordinary soldiers had travelled little. So it came that for most of them the train ride to the front in the summer of 1870 had been their first step outside the familiar *Heimat*³⁹ and, thus, highlighted an especially excited experience; an adventure that had often been recalled in primary sources.⁴⁰

As Kühlich pointed out, the regional background of the troops had impacted upon their experience in wartime and, especially ordinary soldiers, found it difficult to familiarise themselves with social standards and languages. For example, troops from lower social classes commonly addressed their comrades informally with *Du*; an informality which the one-year-volunteers constantly rejected as a sign of insufficient education. The various dialects, such as the *Platt Deutsch* of many soldiers from North Germany, also imposed difficulties in understanding and interaction.⁴¹ It was also not unusual for ordinary troops to mistake the certain German dialects for French.⁴²

The identification with their contingents and units also played an important role in the troops' wartime experience and, thus, revealed certain reputations and prejudices as a result of regional features. Hereby, it is important to mention that the contingents that formed the German armies in 1870/71 had belonged to entirely different war parties in the earlier Austro-Prussian War of 1866. Seven of the twenty-five north German divisions and thirteen of the thirty-one German line infantry divisions who took part in the Franco-Prussian War had

³⁸ Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 4.2., [no pagination].

³⁹ The definition of what the Germans had considered as *Heimat* can be found in the introduction of this dissertation.

⁴⁰ A detailed examination, including examples, of how the transportation to the front had affected the troops' thoughts will be subject to the second chapter of this dissertation.

⁴¹ Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 3.2., [no pagination].

⁴² Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 4.2., [no pagination].

fought on the Austrian side in 1866.⁴³ Although, a limited amount of tensions and disputes flared among the troops of the different contingents, major collisions had been mainly avoided. It can be argued, however, that the German troops were largely unfamiliar with each other when it came to regional customs and traditions; this was due to the fact that most soldiers identified themselves primarily with the province or federate state they came from.⁴⁴

Sources revealed that the contingents of the different parts of Germany held a friendly attitude towards each other and commonly described themselves as ‘brothers’.⁴⁵ In Memoires of Bavarian soldiers, some evidence can be found that, instead of expressing snide remarks, a rather positive and even sympathetic attitude had been adopted regarding Prussian troops:

Uns Soldaten ging das Herz auf, als wir unsere
(preußischen) Kameraden erblickten, mit denen wir uns
berufen fühlten, den Wohlstand und das Glück des theuren
Vaterlandes zu schützen und dem Übermut des Erbfeindes
Schranken zu ziehen.⁴⁶

Here, Stubenrauch referred to the Prussian troops as ‘our comrades’, placing them on an equal level to himself, which clearly indicated that he had faith in the Prussian military as well as he held no prejudices or doubts regarding a successful cooperation. However, he explicitly pointed out that this cooperation had mainly served the purpose of protecting the (German) fatherland against the common French enemy; such expressions were especially predominant in written memoirs constituted after 1871 and were only rarely mentioned in letters of ordinary soldiers. It can be argued, therefore, that the thought of the contingents fighting

⁴³ Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 3.5., [no pagination].

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Stubenrauch, *Erinnerungen*, p. 10; *Translation*: ‘Our hearts were filled with joy as we saw our (Prussian) comrades with whom we felt appointed to protect the wealth and the glory of the dear fatherland and to challenge the presumption of the hereditary enemy’.

united for one German state had been heavily inspired by the unification process which created a subsequent, though not persistent, notion of national identity.⁴⁷

Often, it had been the case that the coincidence with Prussian troops before or during battle unleashed a certain feeling of relief amongst combatants of other contingents, particularly Bavarians. A Bavarian soldier of the Royal Bavarian Infantry Regiment recalled his encounter with Prussian forces:

Nun kamen zwei Bataillone Preußen, ich glaube es waren
die Neunundfünfziger. Stramm und musterhaft, die Pfeifer
an der Spitze das „Preußenlied“ spielend, zogen sie im
Walde an uns vorbei. „Nur man frisch drauf los, Bayern!“
riefen sie uns zu; nun kam auch bei uns wieder neues
Leben und frischer Mut in die Kompagnie.⁴⁸

The way in which Kühnhauser described his observation of Prussian troops highlighted primarily the great increase in motivation he and his Bavarian company had gained from this experience; this was further strengthened by the melodic background created by the pipers. Moreover, referring to the allied forces' appearance as 'brisk and exemplary', it can be argued that the observer viewed his fellow combatants with a certain amount of respect and looking up to them, to some extent even appreciating their presence. Thus, it can also be interpreted that the Prussian troops had enjoyed a fine military reputation.

Particularly for the Bavarian forces, one of the reasons for appreciating the company of the Prussians during the war was arguably the instability of their own military system. The Bavarian military system underwent a significant transformation during the late 1860s when the Bavarian government decided to adopt Prussian regulations and methods. It was then,

⁴⁷ The extent to which national identity had been already present in the mind-set of the troops will be examined in the second chapter of this dissertation.

⁴⁸ Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (Bay. HStA), Abt. IV Kriegsarchiv, III B20, eb 2235, p. 30, Florian Kühnhauser, *Kriegs-Erinnerungen eines Soldaten des königlich bayerischen Infanterie-Leib-Regiments 1870-71*; Translation: 'Now came two battalions of Prussians, I believe it was the fifty-ninth. Brisk and exemplary, the pipers ahead playing the "Prussian song", they passed us in the forest. "Let's get on with it, Bavarians!" they said to us; now new life and refreshed courage came over our company too'.

when 'Bavaria, at the high point of celebrating its national uniqueness, lost its independence to Prussia'.⁴⁹ The unsatisfactory outcome of the war of 1866 had created important impulses for basic reforms in the Bavarian Army constitution: on 30 January 1868, general conscription had been introduced which meant that young men from all social backgrounds had to fulfil military service and not only those from lower classes of population.⁵⁰ However, this was only a fractional amount of change in the slow-moving transformation. The defeat and the ineffectiveness of Bavarian troops in the war of 1866 'had revealed the flaws of the heavily criticised Bavarian Army; it was, however, prohibited under the circumstances to loudly praise the Prussian system'.⁵¹ The reason for this was that the Bavarian population had expressed discontent about the reforms out of reluctance towards Prussia.⁵²

Although, it can be argued that the majority of prejudices had vanished, this rather reserved attitude of the Bavarian population towards Prussians had been carried into the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71. Despite the positive reputations the Prussians had featured during the war, there is some evidence which suggested that certain prejudices had been present. For example, particularly Bavarian troops identified negative characteristics of the Prussians such as their conceited and arrogant behaviour as well as a lack of sentiment.⁵³ It was relatively rare, nevertheless, that soldiers were linked to contingents by certain reputations or were even discriminated by troops from different contingents.

Selected primary and secondary material, however, often indicated that the Bavarians displayed an exception to this. Contemporary historians, who had conducted research in the field, identified several shortcomings of the Bavarian forces in training as well as in stamina

⁴⁹ Regina Bendix, 'Moral Integrity in Costumed Identity: Negotiating "National Costume" in 19th-Century Bavaria', *The Journal of American Folklore*, 111/440 (Spring, 1998), p. 133.

⁵⁰ Mayershofer, *Bevölkerung und Militär*, p. 47.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁵³ Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 3.5., [no pagination].

that had been apparent during military campaigns in 1870/71 they had been engaged in.⁵⁴ In addition to the problems that came with the adoption of the Prussian military system, the Bavarian troops were often criticised by their fellow Prussian combatants. Even though it was generally well-known that the Bavarians had fought with a brave and vehement attitude, they were criticised for their lack of discipline and persistence; their congenial nature also featured a lack of organisation and orderliness, which was rejected by most Prussian soldiers.⁵⁵ These Bavarian shortcomings became especially visible in battles and in the fulfilment of tasks which belonged to the military routine. For example most Bavarian soldiers featured unkempt appearance and insufficient marching performance so that often they were incapable to maintain the Prussian standard tempo and fall behind.⁵⁶

The behaviour of Bavarian troops during the war of 1870/71, especially when confronted with the enemy, had remote consequences for the outcome of most battles. Nevertheless, Prussian officers saw themselves struggling occasionally with the relatively low standards of Bavarian military education. As Ingrid Mayershofer stated, ‘The Bavarians seemed to have been insufficiently prepared for the challenges this “modern war” had imposed on them’ had led to significant disruptions due to Bavarian dissatisfactory performances.⁵⁷

During battle, Bavarian soldiers rarely attacked with the bayonet and proved willing to voluntarily carry wounded comrades to the rear of the battlefield, leaving gaps in the firing line.⁵⁸ In addition, Prussian analysts discovered after the war that Bavarian infantry had needed to be resupplied with ammunition once, as a minimum, in each encounter with French troops, whereas the Prussians rationed the ammunition that had been allocated to them; to

⁵⁴ Bührer, *Volksreligiosität und Kriegserleben*; Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*; Mayershofer, *Bevölkerung und Militär*, Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War*.

⁵⁵ Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 3.5., [no pagination]; Bührer, *Volksreligiosität und Kriegserleben*, p. 51.

⁵⁶ Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 3.5., [no pagination].

⁵⁷ Mayershofer, *Bevölkerung und Militär*, p. 200.

⁵⁸ Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War*, p. 106.

resupply the Bavarians had been a time-consuming process that involved conveying crates of reserve cartridges into the front line and distributing them.⁵⁹ Similarly, Bavarian recruits were insufficiently drilled and had been sent to the front after receiving only two weeks of military training.⁶⁰

These shortcomings had contributed to the vast losses the Bavarian Army had suffered. G. von Hoesslin wrote in a letter to his mother on 1 November 1870 that 34 of the original 52 soldiers in his unit had been wounded, killed, or had become seriously ill; by 11 December Tanera's brigade had dwindled from 192 officers and 7000 men to 40 officers and 2124 men.⁶¹ Hoesslin further described the exhaustion his fellow combatants had suffered:

Our faces were pale and haggard, and morale sank because of the enormous strains and the continuous marches, which almost went in circles without seriously encountering the enemy [...] Through sickness our ranks dwindled in an alarming manner, and it was no rarity for 15, even 20 men from a company to be left behind because of exhaustion, who would then drag themselves along again on a wagon or on food at night.⁶²

This illustrated that the Bavarians, in contrast to the Prussians, lacked the discipline, the training as well as the substance to meet the challenges this war posed. Therefore, high casualties were inevitable which then had a major psychological impact upon the Bavarian soldiers' attitudes before entering following battles. The Prussians, on the contrary, had proved more resistant to such experiences, carried out their war duties and, therefore, were much more able to recover faster from unexpected and costly battles.⁶³

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Bührer, *Volksreligiosität und Kriegserleben*, p. 51.

⁶¹ G. von Hoesslin, *Feldpostbriefe aus dem Deutsch-Französischen Krieg 1870/71*, letter of 01.11.1870; cited in Mark R. Stoneman, 'The Bavarian Army and French Civilians in the War of 1870-71: A Cultural Interpretation', *War in History* (2001), p. 287; Carl Tanera, *Erste und heitere Erinnerungeneines Ordanzoffiziers im Feldzug 1870/71* (München: n.p., 1896), p. 140.

⁶² Hoesslin, *Feldpostbriefe*, letter of 01.11.1870.

⁶³ Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War*, p. 127.

Contemplating relations between the troops, their officers, and their supreme leadership, the questions emerge to what extent the soldiers from different contingents had been able to subordinate themselves and how they adapted to the idea of being led by Prussian commanders. Most soldiers were used to accepting their subordinate social position and to respect their superiors.⁶⁴ It was common that the commanding officer was sympathetic to his troops and was often viewed as a fatherly figure by his men. However, distinct hierarchical relations as they were present in the Prussian German army of 1870/71 did also create the potential for conflicts. For example, incidents of officers abusing their powers occurred regularly which was reflected in their handling of minor offences committed by the soldiers.⁶⁵

Relatively frequently officers had used physical violence to enforce their authority. Although, the application of this form of violence was prohibited, during the Franco Prussian war many soldiers had been beaten by their superior officers; this was especially common among East German units.⁶⁶ The reasons for this behaviour included cowardice and a lack of zeal. As a general rule, these abuses had been tolerated by the majority of soldiers without resistance and dissent and were seldom mentioned in letters. This was largely due to the military education which highlighted the utmost importance of the soldiers' duty to be obedient.⁶⁷ During the war, soldiers rarely complained or revolted against this harsh treatment, mainly because of their willingness to obey and accept the hierarchical structures within the army.

A similar obedience was also held by the troops towards the supreme leadership which was characterised by their implicit faith. The Prussian soldier Ernst Kirsch wrote in a letter addressed to his wife: 'Wir sind ihnen [den Franzosen] in jeder Weise überlegen, wir fühlen die sichere feste Leitung Moltke's und das gibt Vertrauen, der beste moralische Hebel für die

⁶⁴ Meteling, *Ehre, Einheit, Ordnung*, pp. 38-39.

⁶⁵ Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 3.3.4., [no pagination].

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Armee.’⁶⁸ The main cause for this faith can be explained with the traditional willingness to abide by rules and regulations which was embedded in the lower classes, the main source for army recruits and was most common for Prussian troops. Furthermore, this faith had been strengthened by the great victories in the first half of the war. For example, the leadership had been only rarely blamed of holding the responsibility for the high number of casualties these victories inflicted in the documents. Criticism of military actions had been subject to only the politicians and the leadership itself.⁶⁹ The Prussian king, Wilhelm I, as well as the commanders in chief, Prince Friedrich Karl, General von Steinmetz and Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm von Preussen, enjoyed particular popularity not only amongst Prussian troops. In letters there are indications that at every occasion these characters are present, they were greatly celebrated by the troops of the various states who responded via loyalty and attachment.⁷⁰

In both wars, the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71, the strong regional connectivity of the various German troops can be identified by examining their relations and interactions with each other which become visible in wartime routine. In 1866, Germany consisted of a loose set of various states which represented certain individual regional customs and habits. The food they cook, the way they dress and how they spoke; all of which had been implemented parts of each state’s cultural tradition. Clearly, these traditions have persisted throughout the following war of 1870/71 until today.⁷¹ Troops from different states such as Bavaria, Württemberg and Prussia identified themselves differently through regional traditions; however, they shared a similar connectivity to their home region. It can be

⁶⁸ Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv Freiburg (BA-MA), Mg 2, 11437 a, Ernst Otto Johannes Kirsch, Briefe aus dem Feldzug 1870/71, letter to his wife, 15.08.1870. *Translation*: ‘We are superior to the French in every manner, we feel the secure solid guidance of Moltke and this gives us faith, the best moral lever for an army’.

⁶⁹ Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 3.3.4., [no pagination].

⁷⁰ The University of Bonn, *Kriegsbriefe 1870/71* [Online]. Available: <http://s2w.hbz-nrw.de/ulbbn/nav/classification/1468447>; Bertram Heck, letter to his family, 02.12.1870; Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 3.3.4., [no pagination].

⁷¹ The Bavarians, for example, are associated with ‘rustic *Lederhosen*, the beer-happy *Oktoberfest* and the exploits of King Ludwig’ up until today; see Bendix, ‘Moral Integrity’, p. 133.

argued that particularly wartime interactions and activities had been carried out in almost the same manner as they had been carried out in peacetime; in wartime these traditions appeared in limited fashion due to the fact that ordinary troops had been materially equivalent and had only limited resources, including food or clothes, available.

In regard to social and cultural activities practised in the troops' spare time off the battlefield, the war had provided limited possibilities. In civil life, sports such as swimming and gymnastics played were considered commonplace, however the war provided little opportunity to practise physical activities. Because most spare time activities were forms of communication and social activities, the soldiers spent more of their time with a focus on the written word and, more importantly, the spoken word. Besides mere conversations, the most meaningful activities included the performing of improvised theatre, but most relevantly the singing and playing of music.⁷² Therefore, the participation in musical performance, practiced in regiment chapels, occupied a central role in the soldier's spare time; the songs sung were dominated by themes of humoristic nature but also by patriotic and melancholic lyrics. The majority of the ordinary soldiers featured a tendency towards infantile behaviour which was expressed as childish games and masquerades.⁷³ On the contrary, educated war combatants preferred to spend their free time in officer casinos enjoying card games and socialising.⁷⁴ Moreover, the written word was of immense importance to them as this becomes evident in the vast amount of existing letters in which officers had expressed the frequent demands to obtain information and newspapers.⁷⁵

An important element to how regional identity was expressed during the war was the mental connection the soldiers maintained to their *Heimat* through cultural activities such as

⁷² Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part II., sect. 7., [no pagination].

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ The University of Bonn Digital Library, *Kriegsbriefe 1870/71* [Online]. Available: <http://s2w.hbz-nrw.de/ulbbn/nav/classification/1468447>; August Wallmann, letter to his parents, 10.11.1870; Ferdinand Wallmann, letter to his parents, 09.01.1871.

singing songs and engaging with rumours and humour. The nature of the songs sang during both the war of 1866 and that of 1870/71 had been identified as a reliable source of how the lyrics of marching songs and similar texts had functioned as a conveyer of regional identity to the battlefield. For example, in 1870/71 troops from Pomerania had identified themselves with their region of origin in the *Pommernlied*: ‘*Wenn in stiller Stunde Träume mich umwehn, bringen frohe Kunde Geister ungesehn, reden von dem Lande meiner Heimat mir Hellem Meeresstrande düstern Waldreih*’.⁷⁶ The terms ‘*Lande*’ and ‘*Heimat*’ clearly underpinned the heavily regionally infused identity and indicated the love and pride of the Pomeranian troops not for a united German state, but for their region.

The Prussian marching songs from 1866 and 1870/71, for example, had been of similarly patriotic nature. The Prussian officer Werner Deussen described the effect of songs upon his soldiers, telling that they marched with joy, music and positioned flags even in bad weather and were driven by the harmony and the power of the music and their voices; the most popular marching songs, because of their motivating lyrics, were ‘*Ich bin ein Preuße kennt ihr meine Farben, Die Wacht am Rhein*, and, later, *Heil dir im Siegerkranz*’.⁷⁷ In the lyrics, they identified themselves with the regional fatherland, in this case Prussia, but towards the end of the Franco-Prussian War, marching songs had featured a more nationalist character regarding a whole German nation; this, however, will be further outlined in the second chapter.

Above all, such activities had served the purposes of strengthening the troops’ morale, to overcome fear before battle action or to counter the depressive mood after costly battles.⁷⁸ To strengthen the soldiers’ morale and encourage collective behaviour, church music as well as marching music was highly popular. During the battles of 16, 18, 19, and 20 August, the band

⁷⁶ Volksliederarchiv, *Lieder aus dem Deutsch-Französischen Krieg* [Online]. Available: <http://www.volksliederarchiv.de/suchethemazeit31-27.html>.

⁷⁷ BA-MA, MSg 2, 18855, Werner Deussen, letter to his parents, 31.10.1870.

⁷⁸ Bührer, *Volksreligiosität und Kriegserleben*, p. 61.

played famous German praying songs, such as '*Jesus meine Zuversicht*', which were always chosen wisely as the troops were facing death and were surrounded by dying and wounded soldiers; therefore, they needed to be taken away from the dark thoughts of death, and be familiarized with the feeling of success.⁷⁹ This was valid for troops of all contingents as it seemed as if the mere presence of Prussians had a motivating effect on soldiers from different states.

Overall, it became evident that, during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71, regional traditions had persisted. However, ordinary soldiers from the different contingents were only limitedly able to practise them. The most striking factor was that identity had been expressed through the social class system which was in place and remained intact in each of the German states at the time. So it came, that soldiers from the educated middle class and aristocracy, including high ranking officers and one-year volunteers, had been likely to make use of their status in order to gain certain privileges. The conscripts drawn from the lower classes had traditionally obeyed to their superiors, as it had been the case in peacetime; this was particularly evident for Prussian troops who had been part of a long-standing military system which was based on a traditional hierarchical structures. The outlined prejudices and reputations had been mainly allocated to Bavarian soldiers who were insufficiently trained and lacked most of the Prussian standards.

Furthermore, neither was there sufficient evidence of language posing adamant barriers, nor any social or cultural activities which could be identified as purely regional. Clearly, some soldiers had difficulties in understanding certain German dialects, but this had been largely an issue of a lack of education rather than a product of cultural rejection. Social activities and interactions were also based on hierarchy. The singing of songs, both *Heimatlieder* and more nation-related songs, and other artistic performances had been carried out by troops from all

⁷⁹ BA-MA, MSg 2, 18855, Deussen, letter to his parents, 06.10.1870.

participating contingents alike and had a similar impact upon them: they were a welcome distraction to the strains the war had imposed and a motivation at the same time.

II. FACTORS WHICH ENCOURAGED NATIONAL IDENTITY DURING THE WAR

In this chapter, the emphasis will be placed upon the wider perspective of the possible emergence of a 'national identity' as a development of wartime events. Hereby, it is essential to point out which factors contributed to the development of national thoughts in the mind-sets of the German troops during the war and how this affected their attitudes. This chapter firstly examines the troops' mood at the outbreak of war including the spirit at the time of mobilisation and the enthusiasm for volunteering. Hereby, it will be important to explore the differences and similarities in the mobilisation process and the general mood of citizens and troops in the states of Prussia, Bavaria and Württemberg. To what extent had national identity taken root in this early phase of the war? The second section will focus on the major factors and influences that had contributed to a greater national belief; the most relevant of which was the view the German troops held of the enemy and how the creation of a common 'national' enemy had influenced national identity. How had the perception of the enemy troops, population and encounters with armed civilians contributed to a greater sense of 'Germanness' amongst the disparate armies in 1870/71?

Having commenced as a military alliance in mid-1866, the creation of the North German Confederation had brought together various German states, dominated by Prussia, under a common constitution in 1867.⁸⁰ However, particularly the largely catholic southern

⁸⁰ The constitution of the North German Confederation had been finalised on 16 April 1867. The states of Baden, Bavaria, Hesse-Darmstadt and Württemberg had rejected a participation in this confederation. Nevertheless, the southern German states had been economically connected to the North German Confederation through the German customs union or *Deutscher Zollverein* which had been introduced in January 1834; For detailed information confer *Deutscher Zoll, Offizielle Website des Deutschen Zolls* [Online]. Available:

German states had rejected joining such a confederation under protestant Prussian rule, mostly out of reluctance of having to sacrifice their own constitutional independence. In the primarily conservative Bavarian kingdom, this view had been further fuelled by the devastating defeat it had suffered against the Prussians in the war of 1866.⁸¹ Considering dissimilarities in religious views as well as political differences present at the time, it will be important to examine what effect the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870/71 had upon the general mood of the populations; how difficult was it to mobilise southern German troops for a war under Prussian command? During the mobilisation phase in July 1870, there were differences in the mood of the populations and the speed of the mobilisation process.

War enthusiasm had been significantly higher in Prussia than it was the case in southern German states; this was particularly true for young men who felt eager to be part of a larger community and longed for excitement.⁸² The Prussian student Adolf Matthias recalled waiting hours under a hot sun on 15 July 1870 just to catch a glimpse of King Wilhelm I. of Prussia when his train passed through from Bad Ems to Berlin: ‘Never’, he wrote in his diary, ‘have I seen such passion as were released by those magic words, “*der Krieg ist erklärt*”. Officers, civil servants, professors, students, merchants, we all sang *Heil dir im Siegerkranz, Die Wacht am Rhein, Ich bin ein Preusse, kennt ihr meine Farben*, and *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*’.⁸³ This statement showed the dynamic mood sweeping Prussian students at the outbreak of war and highlighted their desire for adventure.

http://www.zoll.de/DE/Der-Zoll/Zollmuseum/Ausstellung/Historische-Abteilung/Deutscher-Zollverein/deutscher-zollverein_node.html.

⁸¹ Mark R. Stoneman, ‘The Bavarian Army and French Civilians in the War of 1870-71’ (Magisterarbeit, Augsburg, 1994), p. 15.

⁸² Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 6.1., [no pagination].

⁸³ Adolf Matthias, *Meine Kriegserinnerungen* (München: Beck, 1912), p. 32.

The amount of young men volunteering for the war in Prussia indicated the popularity of the war even further.⁸⁴ The main reason for this was that the war was viewed by most young men as a sort of amusement, an opportunity to escape from dull daily life and routine; for most of them the trip to the front had been the first major journey in their lives.⁸⁵ Therefore, in this initial phase, the war had been seen by countless young Prussian men as a joyful, positive experience so that possible downsides and consequences were seldom mentioned in testimonies or memoirs.⁸⁶

It can be argued that the mobilisation process in Prussia had liberated national sentiments in the mind-sets of most recruits. The Prussian soldier Richard Gädke wrote to his parents in July 1870:

Hurrah! Es ist wirklich Krieg! Hoch König Wilhelm und hoch Deutschland! [...] Das wird ein fröhlicher, frommer Krieg werden. Nieder mit den Galliern und ihrer Frivolität. In sechs Wochen können wir bereits die erste Schlacht geschlagen haben! Seid um mich nicht besorgt. Sterbe ich, so sterbe ich fürs Vaterland, bleibe ich leben, so mache ich großes Glück.⁸⁷

Especially striking in this letter was the willingness of Gädke to enter this war at any cost as well as his overly excited mood to be part of this great adventure. In the extract of his letter he praised not only the Prussian king, but also the German state; the following negative expression about the ‘Gallic’ enemy⁸⁸, and the belief to sacrifice his life for a worthy purpose indicated that, presumably, he went to war for the German nation rather than for the Prussian

⁸⁴ In Prussia, approximately 17.300 men, 13.700 of whom were students, had voluntarily registered for military service; see Siegfried Fiedler, *Kriegswesen und Kriegsführung im Zeitalter der Einigungskriege* (Bonn: Bernard & Graefe, 1991), p. 279; Harald Lönnecker, *Studenten und der Krieg 1870/71* (Frankfurt: Ares, 2009), p. 4.

⁸⁵ Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 6.1., [no pagination].

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ BA/MA, MSg 1, 1300 Richard Gädke, letter to his parents, 21.7.1870; *Translation*: ‘Hooray! We are really at war! Cheers to King Wilhelm and cheers to Germany! [...] This will be a happy, divine war. Down with the Gauls and their frivolity. In six weeks we could possibly already have fought our first battle! Do not worry about me. If I die, I die for the fatherland, if I live, I will bring great luck.’

⁸⁸ The views the German troops held towards their French enemy and how this contributed to national perception will be examined in detail later in this chapter.

state. However, in his statement, Gädke had failed to clearly identify what he viewed as his *Vaterland*.

The euphoria the outbreak of war had created had captured largely the young population and had been primarily existent in urban areas amongst the educated upper and middle classes. Recruits drawn from the lower classes, which included the majority of ordinary soldiers, held a rather reserved attitude. Thomas Rohkrämer pointed out that most of the letter written in dialect, for him a sign of traditional living circumstances, had displayed little enthusiasm for the war; this social group had reacted to mobilisation with a mixture of feelings including uncertainty and misery.⁸⁹ Furthermore, he highlighted that strong national sentiments had not been present, but the war had been rather viewed as a misfortune that had deprived families of their provider.⁹⁰

Enthusiasm for the war can also be found outside of the North German Confederation. In Bavaria, similar to the mood in Prussia, euphoria broke out in major cities and had thrilled a significant part of the male Bavarian population. Florian Kühnhauser described the assembly of troops in Munich in July 1870:

In allen Landestrachten und aus allen Ständen, der Bauer neben dem Beamten, der Arbeiter neben seinem Fabrikanten, der Sturtzer neben dem Theologen, kamen sie alle je nach der Größe zu stehen; in wenigen Minuten machte der blaue Rock Stand und Rang gleich, alle waren Soldaten und Vaterlandsverteidiger.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Rohkrämer, *Der Militarismus*, p. 89.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Bay. HStA, Abt. IV Kriegsarchiv, III B20, eb 2235, p. 17, Florian Kühnhauser, *Kriegs-Erinnerungen eines Soldaten des königlich bayerischen Infanterie-Leib-Regiments 1870-71*; Translation: 'In all costumes and from all classes, the farmer next to the official, the worker next to his manufacturer, the "Sturtzer" next to the theologian, they all came; in only a few minutes the "blue coat" made class and rank equal, they all were soldiers and representatives of the fatherland'.

This statement indicated that men from all social classes had been present at this gathering. However, it is questionable whether they had been present in equal proportions; thus, assumedly, it was mainly the young male population in Bavaria who had been most significantly affected by war enthusiasm.⁹²

However, it can be argued that particularly in Bavaria it was evident that, although the outbreak of war had eradicated most anti-Prussian and local patriotic sentiments, mobilisation had been difficult. Kühlich had identified the Bavarian Palatinate as the region with the most reluctant and rejecting attitudes towards fighting alongside the Prussians.⁹³ Here, where Prussian troops had been deployed during the mobilisation phase, they had been confronted with repellent reactions by the population; this was largely due to financial strains they had to bear for accommodating Prussian soldiers.⁹⁴ Kühnhauser recounted a conversation amongst villagers near Traunstein when one man expressed his anti-Prussian sentiments: *‘Ja, ja—die Preußen! Die Preußen haben wieder was Schönes angerichtet; das ganze Bayernlandl geht noch mit dieser preußischen Freundschaft zugrunde [...]’*⁹⁵ Hostile feelings towards the Prussians had persisted primarily in rural areas.

In the primarily conservative Kingdom of Bavaria, the willingness to join Prussia in a war and, above all, national sentiments lacked in the hearts of the vast majority of Bavarian people. In comparison to Prussia, the number of volunteers in Bavaria was considerably low. One example of the reserved Bavarian mood during the mobilisation phase was displayed in the city of Bamberg. Only one third of the students volunteered for the war and the overall percentage of Bavarian recruits from the educated classes had been between two and five per

⁹² Stoneman, ‘The Bavarian Army’, p. 10.

⁹³ Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 6.1., [no pagination].

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Bay. HStA, Abt. IV Kriegsarchiv, III B20, eb 2235, p. 13, Kühnhauser, *Kriegs-Erinnerungen*, Translation: ‘Yes, yes the Prussians! The Prussians have done something nice again [ironic]; the whole Bavarian state will perish with this Prussian friendship’.

cent.⁹⁶ The civil population in the catholic city of Bamberg remained largely unaffected by war euphoria. This had been expressed in the absence of a ceremonial send-off of the regional troops on the day they had been leaving to the front, the 23 July, when no national sentiments had been shown on the side of the citizens.⁹⁷ Clearly, this had a negative impact upon the mood and motivation of the troops in the Bamberg regiments. Here, the sense to fight for the German nation was of limited nature or was entirely absent in the mind-sets of troops and civilians and as a result only a few volunteers had been drawn.⁹⁸

In Württemberg, in contrast, mobilisation went smoothly and expectations of fighting alongside the Prussians had been high. Other than the Bavarians, the Württemberg government and population had admired the Prussian military state and proved an exceptional willingness to adjust their own army to Prussian standards.⁹⁹ After the adoption of Prussian military regulations, Stuckow sent some of his officers, amongst them General von Brandenstein, to observe Prussian drill methods.¹⁰⁰ It can be argued that the positive image members of the Württemberg government held of the Prussians also had a reassuring effect upon the population, hence, the troops who had been drawn from this population. Soldiers from Württemberg, part of the German Third Army under Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia, were quickly mobilised; on 17 July, the mobilisation of Württemberg soldiers was ordered and ten days later the field division, consisting of 21,740 men, stood fit for service at the Rhine.¹⁰¹ Although, the troops initially struggled to get used to Prussian rigour, they had adapted to

⁹⁶ Mayershofer, *Bevölkerung und Militär*, pp. 188, 194, 196.

⁹⁷ Mayershofer, *Bevölkerung und Militär*, pp. 187-188.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁹⁹ Albert von Suckow, War Minister of Württemberg from 1870-1874, had been an admirer of Prussian methods by conviction, adopted Prussian drill regulations and sent officers as students or observers to Berlin; Showalter, *The Wars*, p. 214.

¹⁰⁰ Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart (HStAS), E284 a, bü 546, General Brandenstein provided Stuckow with a detailed report describing his observations in Berlin.

¹⁰¹ Paul Sauer, *Das Württembergische Heer in der Zeit des Deutschen und des Norddeutschen Bundes* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1958), p. 223.

Prussian standards fairly quickly.¹⁰² There is little evidence of a negative military reputation of Württemberg troops.

Besides the largely smooth-running mobilisation processes and the enthusiastic mood amongst the populations in major German cities, it can also be said that national sentiments had mainly taken root in the minds of young men, particularly students. Moreover, in Prussia this mood was of an exceptional extent. It is questionable, however, whether the majority of soldiers, drawn from the lower classes, went to war for a 'nation'. A type of national identity had been present at the outbreak of war; however, this was rather due to group dynamic factors than to an actual desire for a united German state.¹⁰³

As the war progressed, one can identify possible catalysts for the strengthening of national identity amongst the German troops, including the views and attitudes they held towards the French enemy and its nation. Hereby, the way in which the enemy was viewed had impacted upon how the German troops viewed themselves. Encounters with French troops, *Franc-tireurs*, or the *Turkos* had been perceived differently and had shaped a certain prejudiced picture of the French population that had evoked antipathy, thus greater national sentiments, amongst the German combatants.¹⁰⁴ France, in retrospect, had been seen as *the* major military threat to nineteenth-century Germany. Besides its geographical position, the memories of the Napoleonic Wars of 1803-1815 and the wars of liberation of 1813-1815 weighted heavy in the hearts of most Germans. The sentiments of these times had been reignited by Napoleon III's war declaration on Prussia in July 1870, prompting the Germans to recall the long-standing image of the French enemy.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 224.

¹⁰³ Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 6.1., [no pagination].

¹⁰⁴ *Franc-tireurs* were French civilians and, especially, guerrilla fighters or snipers. The term *Turkos* was used by the German combatants to describe the French colonial troops.

¹⁰⁵ The German press often symbolically spoke of a national body wounded by the French attack: 'Today all the old wounds of Germania's body are bleeding again', wrote a journalist just after the declaration of war;

What exactly was this image and how had it evoked togetherness amongst different German states? Primarily, the general perception was that of France as the aggressor. The French were held responsible for provoking this war so that it was ultimately the role of the German population to counter such aggression.¹⁰⁶ In addition, the majority of Germans believed that joining Prussia in a war against France was thoroughly justified considering past French hostilities.¹⁰⁷ In the letters of soldiers, negative remarks concentrated mainly on the figure of Napoleon III, however, occasional Francophobe expressions had been made by high ranking officers.¹⁰⁸ It was the German civilian population who frequently referred such antipathy towards the whole of the French nation; this was relatively rare in letters of soldiers.¹⁰⁹

Regarding the French regular forces, again, there are some indications of feelings of antipathy which derived from the countless stereotypical nicknames they had been given. For example, German soldiers referred to them most commonly as ‘*Rothosen*’, ‘*Hallunken*’, ‘*Schufte*’ or simply “*Feind*”, often attributed by the term ‘*feige*’.¹¹⁰ Clausewitz’s concept of ‘hostile feelings’ attempted to explain how these feelings occurred in combat between soldiers:

Essentially combat is an expression of hostile feelings. But in the large-scale combat that we call war hostile feelings often have become hostile intentions. At any rate there are usually no hostile feelings between individuals. Yet such

Schwäbischer Merkur, 171 (22 July 1870), p. 753; Christine G. Krüger, ‘German Suffering in the Franco–German War, 1870/71’, *German History*, 29/3 (2010), p. 414.

¹⁰⁶ Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 5.1., [no pagination].

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ A selection of letters in which German troops expressed a negative attitude towards Napoleon III or his nation include Wilhelm Antoine, letter to his parents, 18.07.1870; Walter Bauchmüller, letter to his sister, 04.09.1870; Gustav Bosch, letter to his sister-in-law, 07.11.1870; Bernhard Hartmann, letter to his wife, 25.12.1870; these letters can be found under The University of Bonn, *Kriegsbriefe 1870/71* [Online]. Available: <http://s2w.hbz-nrw.de/ulbbn/nav/classification/1468447>.

¹⁰⁹ Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 5.1., [no pagination].

¹¹⁰ Heidi Mehrkens (ed.), ‘Militärangehörige: Deutsch-französischer Krieg 1870/71 in Frankreich und Deutschland im Krieg (18.-20. Jahrhundert): Zur Kulturgeschichte der europäischen „Erbfeindschaft“’, (März 2005), p. 102 [Online]. Available: http://rzbl04.biblio.etc.tu-bs.de:8080/docportal/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/DocPortal_derivate_00001699/Darstellung_nach_Kommunikatorengruppen.pdf;jsessionid=3BFB402FC3DC40807819ABFEA06879B8.

emotions can never be completely absent from war. Modern wars are seldom fought without hatred between nations; this serves more or less as a substitute for hatred between individuals.¹¹¹

A similar process took place in the war of 1870/71 between German and French troops when ‘soldiers not only had hostile intentions, but often hate their opponent as members of the opposite side, members of the other nation’.¹¹² These feelings both influenced the attitudes of the Germans towards the French enemy and their identification with the German nation.

Contact with French forces had often been described in a careless, frivolous manner, partly because the enemy had not been taken seriously and his military effectiveness was downplayed. :

So gingen wir etwa eine Stunde lang vor, lagen zeitweilig auf dem Bauch und verloren dank der schlechten Schüsse der Franzosen nur etwa 12 Mann meist leichtverwundet. Unser kleiner Lieutenant von Röhl bekam einen Schuß in den rechten Oberarm. Er rief: „Es lebe der König“ und schwupp hatte er einen dito in den linken Arm. Mir flog eine schon etwas schlappe Kugel durch den Kinnbart, riß einige Borsten aus und verwundete meinem Nebenmann die eben erhobene Hand nicht unbeträchtlich.¹¹³

This statement showed how German soldiers occasionally made battles appear ridiculous by pointing out insufficient French shooting skills. Downgrading the enemy’s ability to fight assumedly required the Germans to think about their military knowledge in a superior fashion. What had started as small-scale distinction between two armies had developed into large-scale comparisons between two nations. It can be suggested that it was the Germans, not the

¹¹¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (London: Wordsworth, 1997), p. 88.

¹¹² Stoneman, ‘The Bavarian Army’, p. 17.

¹¹³ Hans Hertz, *Briefe aus dem Deutsch-Französischen Krieg*, letter of 17.08.1870; cited in Mehrkens, *Statuswechsel*, p. 53. *Translation*: ‘We carried on like this for an hour, occasionally, we lay on our belly and thanks to the bad shooting skills of the French we lost only twelve men, mostly slightly wounded. Our small Lieutenant von Röhl got shot in the right arm. He called: “Long live the King” and suddenly received the next bullet into his left arm. A fairly weak bullet flew through my chin beard, teared out some bristles and wounded the man next to me not inconsiderably’.

Bavarians or Prussians, who were displayed in this statement as the stronger party in the war, to a certain extent indicating the military superiority of not only one contingent but the whole German nation.

The development of certain prejudices and stereotypical thinking had been relatively common on the side of the Germans. During the war, the French troops were criticised for their lack of skill and diligence when it came to the fulfilment of tasks where particular attention to detail was vital, for example, at outpost service or shooting.¹¹⁴ Additionally, the Germans strongly condemned French lack of discipline and frequently commented on their slender appearance; terms such as ‘Kerlchen’, ‘Schwächling’, ‘Nussknacker’, ‘Hanswurst’ had been commonly used by German soldiers to describe the appearance of French recruits and further clarified the enemy image.¹¹⁵ It can be argued that the filtering out of the opponents’ weaknesses had required a certain amount of assurance about the own qualities.

Particularly, French armed civilians, or *Franc-tireurs*, as they had performed ambushes relatively frequently in the second half of the war provoked heavy critique amongst the German combatants and, especially their leadership.¹¹⁶ To reduce *Franc-tireurs* actions, the German military had introduced certain counter-measures at the end of August 1870. For example, an order had been issued that French prisoners of war had to identify themselves as combatants through visible badges; all others had to be taken to war courts and, if they were found guilty for illegal participation in the war, had to expect a death sentence or ten years of forced labour in Germany.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 5.3.1., [no pagination].

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 had been fought in two different phases: firstly, the war against French conscript armies which ended with the capitulation and the capture of Napoleon III after a costly battle at Sedan on 1 September 1870 and, secondly, the war against the peoples’ armies of the French *République*. Encounters with the resistant French civil population had been a vital part of the second phase.

¹¹⁷ Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 8.3., [no pagination].

In general, German soldiers shared the view of their military leadership that the interference of civilians into war-related events was illegitimate. However, these encounters were a popular topic in German war letters for the reasons that they occasionally displayed an exciting change in outpost service routine, and they were dismissed as ‘deceitful’ actions.¹¹⁸ The French regular forces had been frequently criticised by the Germans for not ‘playing by the rules’ and fighting in a ‘dirty’, ‘undisciplined’ manner; this was part of the created image of the *Erbfeind*; this term, meaning ‘inherited enemy’, became increasingly used by historians to describe Franco-German relations in that time.¹¹⁹ The Bavarians, for example, had expected to fight a ‘manly enemy whom they could see and recognise as such, an enemy who would not shoot and then run, hide or pretend to be an innocent civilian’.¹²⁰ The way the enemy nation behaved in this war had often been viewed as ‘immoral’ and ‘disgraceful’, characteristic features that opposed to German values and ideals. The cultural ideal of ‘Germanness’ at the time implemented an image of the obedient citizen to *König* and *Vaterland*, hence soldiers; troops from all German contingents predominantly identified themselves as honest, loyal, brave, indulgent and warm-hearted.¹²¹ Therefore, it can be argued that these values had been part of a national identity, or a greater sense of ‘Germanness’, as they had been fuelled by the ‘misbehaviour’ of the enemy nation.

Particularly apparent became the troops’ identification as what can be called ‘higher human beings’ due to their German origin, when confronted with French colonial troops, *Turkos*.¹²² These colonial troops played a significant role in the intensification of an enemy

¹¹⁸ Mehrkens, ‘Militärangehörige’, p. 109; Here a small selection of letters that mentioned encounters with French civilians: Friedrich Wilhelm Barth, letter to his brother, 14.10.1870; Johann Lempertz, letter to his wife, 23.11.1870; Nikolaus Port, letter to his wife and child, 06.12.1870; Jacob Thielen, letter to a comrade, 13.12.1870; August Wallmann, letter to his wife, 12.11.1870 [Online.] Available: <http://s2w.hbz-nrw.de/ulbbn/nav/classification/1468447>.

¹¹⁹ Stoneman, ‘The Bavarian Army’, p. 276; Seyferth, *Die Heimatfront*, p. 61.

¹²⁰ Stoneman, ‘The Bavarian Army’ p. 276.

¹²¹ This was applicable for Prussians and troops from the southern states alike as such values had been carried into the war from civilian life; Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 4.5.2.1., [no pagination].

¹²² *Turkos* or *Turcos* was the nickname for the Algerian and Tunisian riflemen regiments that had fought on side of their French colonial ruler.

image and the strengthening of ‘Germanness’ in the mind-sets of most German soldiers. According to Kühlich, the refusing attitude towards the *Turkos* stemmed from ‘their exotic nature and strangeness which displayed an entirely new experience for most German soldiers’; this notion of uncertainty quickly developed into hatred, attributing the African combatants to a particular cruel and wild character.¹²³

Amongst other things, rumours circulated in the German armies that *Turkos* treacherously opened fire upon German troops from ambush and so contributed to their reputation as ‘wild, ruthless animals’.¹²⁴ Furthermore, some evidence can be found that German combatants believed the *Turkos* continued fighting with wounded soldiers and subsequently abused and mutilated their victims.¹²⁵ Most prejudices and reputations the German soldiers held towards the *Turkos* were prompted by the German government and military leadership and served the purpose of deepening morale and national togetherness by displaying the Germans as the superior peoples. In essence, however, it was the French themselves who had been held responsible for exposing the German troops and people to such terrible cruelties:

The cruelties and sexual bestialities that the *turcos* and Arabs committed against the wounded are according to their stage of civilization, not so much to be imputed to them but to the European government that, knowing about their customs, leads these African hordes to the theatre of war.¹²⁶

Here, Bismarck himself had spread apparent *Turkos* behaviour amongst his people. There is, however, some evidence which suggested that these endowments of national meaning, taken by the German government, had been partly successful, as will be outlined in the next chapter.

¹²³ Kühlich, *Die deutschen Soldaten*, part I., sect. 5.3.2., [no pagination].

¹²⁴ Ibid; Seyferth, *Die Heimatfront*, p. 47.

¹²⁵ One German soldier described in detail the alleged abuses by *Turkos* on the wounded and prisoners of war arriving on a train in Mannheim; Theodor Huber, *Kriegsbriefe*, letter to brother, 08.08.1870 [Online]. Available: <http://s2w.hbz-nrw.de/ulbbnhans/content/titleinfo/1973197>.

¹²⁶ *Schwäbischer Merkur*, 14 (18 Jan. 1871), p. 100; cited in Krüger, ‘German Suffering’, p. 415.

In conclusion, it can be said that the two possible catalysts for a greater national sentiment amongst German troops in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71 outlined in this chapter had partly succeeded. The mobilisation phase of July 1870, therefore, contributed to a type of war enthusiasm, involving groups of people in the whole of Germany, which had not been experienced before to an equal extent. Although, this enthusiasm and euphoria had affected primarily young, educated men, its existence and infectious nature cannot be denied. In Prussia, evidence for this can be found in the high number of volunteers. However, also in the Bavarian capital the mood at the outbreak of war had been a positive one. Rural areas were an exception where a large number of recruits had been drawn from; men who lacked the time to be concerned with great national sentiments for their worries lay with their families at home. The notion of entering a war against a common enemy had been partly present in all German regiments. The perception of this war as a 'national' war derived from the creation of a stereotypical enemy image which included not only French soldiers, but also developed into a German struggle against the French nation and civilians. 'Uncivilised' and 'deceitful' actions and fighting methods of *Franc-tireurs* and *Turkos* further encouraged the existing German image of the French's illegitimate style of warfare and, thus, gave reason for identity as the 'superior nation'.

III. THE CONSTRUCTION OF GERMAN UNITY AND THE LEGACY OF THE WAR

After the final peace settlement on 10 May 1871, the writing of memoirs became a popular exercise amongst war veterans who felt to share their experiences with the public. The Franco-Prussian War represented a prime example of how actual wartime experience had been transformed by the media and government in order to foster national sentiments amongst the regionally dissected German population. The term ‘memory’ refers to the faculty by which the mind stores and remembers information, whereas experience means the practical contact with and observation of facts or events that leave an impression on one.¹²⁷

However, memories are not a mere reflection of the recruits’ battlefield experience; the gratification about positive events, such as the German Unification on 18 January 1871 and the following armistice on 26 January, played a key part in the blurring of actual experiences. Some historians have pointed out that the foreseeable unification had been an important tool utilised by the media and government at the time in order to encourage national thinking, but

¹²⁷ Catharine Soanes & Sara Hawker (eds.), *Compact Oxford English Dictionary for Students* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), p. 635.

how persistent did this notion prove to be?¹²⁸ This chapter will focus upon the extent to which the perception of the war had changed and what measures were taken by the government and media in order to forge national sentiments amongst the troops and how this had influenced the troops' national thinking. Moreover, it will be highlighted how the war had been displayed in soldiers' memories and, in return, how the dead had been displayed in the aftermath of the war.

With the series of joyful events, including the unification of the German states which was followed by an armistice and finally the ceasefire, the troops at the time associated one particular feeling: relief. There is little doubt that the announcement of the war's ending and the adjunctive joy of returning home, re-uniting with their beloved family, had been shared by Prussians, Bavarians, high and low ranks alike. It is questionable, however, whether the majority of soldiers were aware that they returned home as 'heroes of a unified German nation', celebrated by the population, the media, and the government. It can be argued that such sweeping notions had affected a returning soldier if he was vulnerable to psychological manipulation, group pressure or collective hysteria. Those soldiers who let themselves be swept away by the flush of victory, wrote their memoirs in the following years in an excessively nationalist and patriotic manner.

The ultimate rewards, during the war as well as after, a soldier could receive for extraordinary performances on the battlefield were medals; the most popular amongst these was the Iron Cross.¹²⁹ For example, an officer became a war hero when he held the absolute control over his subordinates in dangerous situations in order to lead them to successful

¹²⁸ Mehrkens, *Statuswechsel*, p. 19.

¹²⁹ The iron cross was originally introduced in 1813 by Kaiser Frederic Wilhelm as a campaign medal awarded for acts of heroism, bravery and leadership. The iron cross reintroduced in the Franco Prussian War of 1870 - 1871 and in the First World War 1914 - 1918 when it gained in significance for being the first German award medal which be earned by all soldiers, independent from rank and origin; Choppers Club, *History of the Iron Cross* [Online]. Available: http://www.choppers.com/iron_cross.asp.

attacks; whilst the officer played the role as a *Führer-Held*, the heroic soldier had to prove that he could be a cold-blooded fighter within the limits created by his officer.¹³⁰

During the war, heroic actions were not only honoured with awards, but it was also common to publicise them in newspapers. In the war year of 1870-71, for example, the Prussian military newspaper *Militär-Wochenblatt* issued regularly several pages of summaries naming all of those officers and soldiers who impressed the authorities through their superb bravery in close contact with the enemy.¹³¹ In a military-patriotic writing style, men were praised in the following terms:

In der Schlacht bei Saarbrücken erhielt Vice-Feldwebel Sprickmann-Kerkering der 12. Kompagnie, aus Münster, mit einem Halbzuge Befehl, eine avancierende feindliche Abtheilung durch Salvenfeuer zurückzuweisen. Nach einigen, auf sein Kommando abgegebenen Salven meldete er sich beim Kompagnie-Chef mit den Worten: „*Ich bitte abgelöst zu werden, da ich kein deutliches Kommando mehr geben kann.*“ Eine feindliche Kugel hatte ihm die rechte Kinnlade total zerschmettert, kaum vermochte er sich noch verständlich zu machen. Jetzt ziert den Tapfern das eiserne Kreuz.¹³²

The men who found themselves in such a column had not been left untouched by this; they were suffused with pride. This pride mingled with the feeling that they had fought for a rightful purpose, the national cause, and the knowledge that they had done their job extraordinarily well. To many of them receiving an award meant that all their suffering was not worthless after all. The Franco-Prussian War, often characterised as the first German national war, served as a prime example of how the ordinary soldier, who had served his duty

¹³⁰ Mayershofer, *Bevölkerung und Militär*, pp. 206-207.

¹³¹ *Militär-Wochenblatt*, 01.01.1871; 31.01.1871; 22.04.1871; 31.05.1871.

¹³² Ibid., 31.05.1871. Translation: 'In the battle near Saarbrücken Vice-Sergeant Sprickmann-Kerkering from Münster, 12. Company, received the order to drive back an advancing enemy formation through volley fire. After several volleys, fired by his commando, he reported to the chief of company: "I am asking to be replaced because I cannot give any clear orders anymore". An enemy bullet had smashed his right lower jaw so that he could barely vulgarize. Now the Iron Cross is decorating him'.

in the war, was transformed into a national hero.¹³³ This transformation occurred when a soldier received the full recognition for his actions in war whereby he represented the collective confidence in victory in the face of danger, boosting national sentiments.¹³⁴

Another factor serving the attempt to create a stronger national thinking amongst the troops was speeches and leaflets by kings and government, during as well as after the war. Already in the mobilisation phase in July 1870, pamphlets with strong national patriotic contents had been handed out. The Württemberg editor Otfrid Mylius encouraged not only men from his region to participate in the war, but he called upon '*Alle deutschen Herzen! Deutsche Männer! Deutsche Jünglinge!*' to fight with '*Gott für Nationalität und Vaterland!*'.¹³⁵ Appealing to the German armies, the Prussian King also made public efforts to encourage national thinking in an announcement on 2 August that read '*Ganz Deutschland steht einmüthig in den Waffen gegen einen Nachbarstaat, der uns überraschend und ohne Grund den Krieg erklärt hat. Es gilt die Vertheidigung des bedrohten Vaterlandes, unserer Ehre, des eignen Heerdes*'.¹³⁶ Both of these examples featured strong national patriotic language and were addressed to all Germans with the purpose of creation sentiments of national unity.

After the war, satisfying feelings, such as the pride to have successfully participated in a war against the utter enemy France as well as having taken part in the creation of the German nation, significantly overshadowed the actual experiences, especially the sinister ones. As a result, in the memoirs the Franco-Prussian War had often been presented as the honest, justified war; where exertions and fear moved into the background to give way to joyful and heroic scenes.

¹³³ Buschmann, *Einkreisung und Waffenbruderschaft*, p. 139.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ HStAS, E271 c, Bü 964, 'Aufruf an alle deutschen Herzen', Stuttgart, 18.07.1870.

¹³⁶ HStAS, E294, Bü 26, 'An die Armeel', Mainz, 02.08.1870.

The real experiences indicated that the fear to lose one's own life was a constant issue, but discipline encouraged the troops to overcome it for the moment of battle. However, in memoirs the feeling of fear was exchanged with uncertainty about the outcome of a battle, especially in the first phase of the war. Carl von Rasp portrayed his feelings during his first battle as follows:

Es war ein eigentümliches Gefühl, das mich in diesem Augenblick beherrschte, wo ich zum ersten Mal einem Kugelregen entgegen ging. Es war nicht Angstgefühl, doch eine gewisse Sorge, was die nächsten Stunden bringen würden.¹³⁷

The reason for such statements was that in memoirs, it was not common to admit fear. In fact, the confession of any kind of weakness would not have fitted into the German picture of the heroic fighter; the soldier who so courageously sacrificed his own life for the sake of his comrades and the German nation.¹³⁸ The total disregard of the soldiers' own safety gained a new dimension after the war and formed the basis of most of the memoirs.

There is also the indication that the troops' main thoughts in their writings after the war were circulating around their own heroic actions. Hereby, it was common to use a dramatic, sometimes even poetic style of language; the usage of exaggerations, superlatives and comparisons was very popular. A Bavarian infantry soldier remembered an experience with a wounded comrade:

Soldat Durner traf es im letzten Augenblick, als wir abgelöst wurden u. zurückkehren wollten. Er bat mich herzlich ihn nicht zurückzulassen. Ich verband ihn notdürftig mit meinem Taschentuch u. brachte ihn unterm größten Kugelregen u. den schwierigsten Umständen unter Beihilfe zweier Soldaten vom Inf. Leib-Rgt. an den Verbandplatz u. legte ihn neben G. Leutnant Rau v. der 4.

¹³⁷ Bay. HStA, Abt. IV Kriegsarchiv, III B20, eb 2259, Carl von Rasp, *Aus meinem Soldatenleben* (München: n.p., 1912), p. 16; *Translation*: 'There was a curious feeling in that moment, when I firstly entered the hail of bullets. It was not the feeling of fear, but a certain concern about what the next hours may bring'.

¹³⁸ Wawro, *Franco-Prussian War*, p. 162.

Kompagnie, welcher bereits am Sterben war, worauf ich mich von ihm verabschiedete.¹³⁹

In this extract, it is particularly conspicuous that the wounded soldier was carried to the next sick bay under the *greatest hail of bullets* and the *most difficult circumstances*. Due to the fact that his statement described a minor battle near Vernon on 22 November 1870, it can be assumed that he used the superlatives not because they express his actual experience at the time, but to highlight his heroic action to an even greater extent; he also made little effort to explain the exact circumstances.

Another phenomenon is the literal absence of dissatisfactory experiences in most of the written memoirs. In the face of all the unpleasant situations, the lack of food and exhausting marches the war brought about, it is surprising that memoirs hardly show any evidence of sinister experiences. One could speculate that it would only be common sense for combatants to exploit the writing of memoirs for the purpose of moaning about the exertions or how their governments handled certain situations. Surprisingly, this was not the case. The reasons for this were often of psychological nature. Perceptions and memories have a holistic character so that chronological experiences exist only as a bundled general impression.¹⁴⁰ The time between the end of the war and the writing of memoirs amounted to several years, often twenty-five years or more. During that time, the veterans' memory could have been weakened significantly, so that it is possible that the way he remembered his experiences in the war would be transformed into a generally positive impression.

¹³⁹ Bay. HStA, Abteilung IV Kriegsarchiv, HS 839, Josef Denk, 2. *Infanterie Regiment, Erinnerungen 1870/71*, p. 9. *Translation*: 'Soldier Durner was hit in the last moment, just as we were about to be replaced and wanted to return. He asked me not to leave him behind. I taped up his wounds with a tissue and, under the greatest hail of bullets and the most difficult circumstances, I carried him with the help of two soldiers to the sick bay and put him down next to Lieutenant Rau, who was already about to die, and thereafter I said goodbye'.

¹⁴⁰ Wolf Singer, *Wahrnehmen, Erinnern, Vergessen* [Online]. Available: http://www.brain.mpg.de/fileadmin/user_upload/images/Research/Emeriti/Singer/Historikertag.pdf, p. 2.

Apparently, veterans carefully selected the information which deserved a place in their memoirs; not only the memories which circulated around his own actions, but also those which presented the extraordinary morale of the German soldier in a particularly good light, as well as the strong company between the troops which always had an impact on them. All of this was described on a national level and not on a regional. Memoirs rarely differentiated between regional and national troops; they spoke of the ‘German troops’. Particular attention had been directed towards the outstanding courage of all German soldiers; this was usually mentioned in connection with the massive firepower of the enemy’s weapons *Chassepot* and *Mitrailleuse* which had earned great respect especially from officers for the devastation they had caused.¹⁴¹ Subsequent memoirs aided the creation of an excessively beautified picture of a war where the German soldier went into battle against an enemy with superior firepower completely motivated and utterly fearless. In order to further emphasise the bravery of the German troops in this harsh war, the resistance of the French was often highlighted: ‘*Aber die nur langsam weichenden Gegner wehrten sich tapfer um jeden Fußbreit Erde und ließen keines ihrer Feldzeichen im Stich*’.¹⁴²

Intensified by the glorious military victories the Germans had achieved over the French in the early phase of the war, national sentiments were also popularly recalled by soldiers from south German states.¹⁴³ Bavarian infantry man Florian Kühnhauser expressed how he felt about participating in this war:

Möchten die gewaltigen Waffenthaten der deutschen
Armee in jener großen Zeit den Söhnen dieser wackeren
Männer, der Jugend, der Mit- und Nachwelt ein
leuchtendes Vorbild sein, dann wird die Begeisterung zum
Wehrstand, die Liebe zum engern und weitem Vaterlande
hell auflodern, und dann können wir in Tagen der Gefahr

¹⁴¹ Carl Tanera, *Der Krieg von 1870/71 dargestellt von Mitkämpfern* (München: Beck, 2006), p. 221; Wachenhusen, *Vom ersten bis zum letzten Schuss*, p. 8.

¹⁴² Tanera, *Der Krieg von 1870/71*, p. 240. Translation: ‘But the slowly returning enemy fought back bravely for every inch of soil and did not let down any of their standards’.

¹⁴³ Green, *Fatherlands*, p. 6.

wieder ausrufen: „Lieb‘ Vaterland magst ruhig sein! [...] Deshalb aber rollt doch noch echtes Soldatenblut in unseren Adern, und wir sind stolz darauf, teilgenommen zu haben an diesen so blutigen Kämpfen und glorreichen Siegen, als Mitgründer des so mächtigen deutschen Reiches, wir halten noch unser Banner und stehen fest zu unserem Wahlspruch: „In Treue steht – mit Gott – für König, Kaiser und Vaterland!“ – Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!¹⁴⁴

This account is unsurpassable in terms of nationalist and patriotic expressions. Here, the author pointed out the importance of the war for future generations, the bravery of the German soldier followed by the ultimate result – the creation of a united Germany – that was brought about by men like Kühnhauser. He integrated himself as part of a German nation emerging from the war whereby he claimed his participation in this historical event. The Franco-Prussian War represented, therefore, the first piece of common German history that the Prussian as well as the Bavarian or Württemberg identified with.¹⁴⁵ Such statements were not rare in after-war writings and were expressed with pride about their own achievements.¹⁴⁶

Nevertheless, the written accounts after the war were not only positive memories of bravery and acts of heroism that were recalled, but also bad experiences were remembered. A major part in the memoirs of war veterans was devoted to the shocking numbers of casualties the German armies suffered during the first phase of the war; this, however, was largely used to further highlight the immense luck, combined with the belief of military superiority, which was attributed to the Germans.

¹⁴⁴ Bay. HStA, Abt. IV Kriegsarchiv, III B20, eb 2235, p. 30, Kühnhauser, *Kriegs-Erinnerungen*; p. 264; *Translation*: ‘That the great weapons actions of the German armies in this great time be a bright example to the sons of these brave men, the youth, the world now and the after-world, then will the enthusiasm for military service, and the love for the close and far fatherland be ignited, then we can in days of danger loudly say again: “Lieb‘ Vaterland, magst ruhig sein!” [...] This is why still real soldiers blood flows in our veins, and we are proud to have participated in these bloody battles and glory victories as the cofounders of the powerful German Reich. We hold up our banners and adhere to our motto: “In Treue steht – mit Gott – für König, Kaiser und Vaterland!” Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!’.

¹⁴⁵ Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor*, p. 15.

¹⁴⁶ For more examples see Olaf Haselhorst, ‘Operationen der deutschen Heere im Krieg gegen Frankreich 1870/71’, in Jan Ganschow, Olaf Haselhorst, Maik Ohnezeit, Maik (eds.), *Der Deutsch-Französische Krieg 1870/71: Vorgeschichte, Verlauf, Folgen* (Graz: Ares, 2009), pp. 83-120.

In many of the personal memories the soldiers had not recoiled from describing the devastating state of the battlefields in great detail. Whereas in letters and diaries the reactions of the troops towards those dreadful scenes had been rather reserved, in the written memories they had the vacancy to express what they have seen in the mornings after battle. Hereby, they were able to reflect upon experiences and to strongly emphasise the most moving details. The Prussian Artillery officer Friedrich Freudenthal recalled his experiences after the battle of Gravelotte on 18 August 1870:

It was gruesome; we had to force our horses through rows of corpses, and I'll never forget the sound of skulls cracking beneath our wheels and the dull thump of arms and legs caught in our spokes; all cohesion was lost as our horses frantically shied, trying to find a way around the dead.¹⁴⁷

This extract enables the reader to create a clear picture of how a deserted battlefield must have looked like in the first phase of the Franco-Prussian War. Freudenthal did not distinguish between French or German deaths, which suggests that there was not a way of telling who those dull thumbs of arms and legs had belonged to. It is, therefore, to assume that this description had not been written with any particular sort of patriotic thoughts. He stated the most devastating experience a survivor could have in its purest and most realistic form, and, it was imaginable that such experiences accompanied the veterans throughout their entire lives.

However, in a quest to initiate national thinking amongst the German population, the government and media had not been able to objectively judge the costs that the German forces had paid in blood; instead, they were utilised to excessively highlight the German suffering in this war for the national cause. The views that were constructed by the media and press, or personal environment consisted seldom of the troops' own experiences in the war, but of

¹⁴⁷ Freudenthal, *Von Stade bis Gravelotte*, p. 127.

reflections of foreign impressions.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, the extent to which the returning soldiers had been influenced by the media depended also upon the mind-sets of their relatives, who had been presented with war-related information in wartime and had been more vulnerable to their opinions being shaped by the media.¹⁴⁹

In displaying the dead, artists and writers often distinguished between dead German and enemy forces. The picture of the German as the superior fighter, the national hero who died for the fatherland, became especially evident in after-war paintings and publications. The typical motives of German contemporary war paintings included battle scenes in which the Germans were displayed as the victorious side. In media accounts and paintings they served the purpose of purporting the image of the German soldiers dying for an honourably achieved triumph.¹⁵⁰ Mehrkens identified that the displayed dead German soldiers embodied three civil ideals: 1) the national hero who defended his life and its values with a rifle placed on his chest; 2) the loving father and husband holding his wedding ring; 3) the believer with the gesture of praying.¹⁵¹ This applied to all German troops independent of their region of origin. The actions of the German troops and the war itself had been further nationalised and transported to the public in form of war memorials. A memorial in Wörlitz inscribed ‘*1870-71 the heroic death for the fatherland died [...]*’ or another one in Winsen read ‘*A lesson to France, an honour to Germany*’; these inscriptions carried national thoughts and evoked the impression of national unity.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Mehrkens, *Statuswechsel*, p. 22.

¹⁴⁹ For a detailed account on the home front and the importance of wartime correspondence between soldiers and relatives see Seyferth, *Die Heimatfront*.

¹⁵⁰ Mehrkens, *Statuswechsel*, p. 67.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Kriegsdenkmäler, *Deutsch-Französischer Krieg 1870/71* [Online]. Available: http://www.anhalt-dessau.de/bilder/xl/anhalt_gedenken_woerlitz_9.jpg; http://www.google.de/imgres?um=1&hl=de&biw=1366&bih=624&tbnid=oZzNbv9pd-SkM:&imgrefurl=http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Denkmal_Deutsch-Franz%25C3%25B6sischer_Krieg,_Winsen_%28Aller%29.jpg&docid=G8EKRqL-rKUe3M&imgurl=http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/33/Denkmal_Deutsch-Franz%2525C3%2525B6sischer_Krieg,_Winsen_%28Aller%29.jpg&w=1936&h=2592&ei=VpU8UpWSMcOk

In a coloured print by Georg Bleibtreu, showing Württemberg troops at the battle of Wörth on 6 August 1870, no visible dead can be made out.¹⁵³ However, the Württemberg troops were displayed as the fearless attackers aiming at defeating the national enemy. Therefore, it represented an example that the determination to fight for a national cause and high morale was not unique to Prussian troops, but to every man who participated in the war. It was the German soldier, and not the Prussian or the Bavarian, who was celebrated and accepted as a national hero for those men had collectively succeeded in defeating France and equally risked their lives for the creation of a unified Germany. The real experience, however, looked far different than was displayed after the war by the government and media, as it had been examined in the previous sections.

In summary, the memories of war participants, independent from their activity and rank, displayed a reflection of their experiences; hence, memoirs still displayed a ‘personal source’.¹⁵⁴ However, there were a number of external influences which could significantly transform the thoughts about certain experiences so that particularly ordinary soldiers had depicted the war as an overall positive event. Influenced by their personal environment, the media and the government, the troops received a great deal of recognition when they returned from the war. This recognition displayed a positive experience, providing room for national sentiments and the feeling of having fought for a just cause. The German soldiers, independent of rank, social status or regional origin, returned home as ‘national heroes’. The soldiers’ written accounts after the war did not reflect their real experiences; whereas sinister

00XfrYFI&zoom=1&iact=rc&dur=263&page=2&tbnh=136&tbnw=111&start=23&ndsp=32&ved=1t:429,r:28,s:0,i:169&tx=58&ty=47.

¹⁵³ Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, *Coloured Print by Georg Bleibtreu* [Online]. Available: http://bpggate.picturemaxx.com/index.php?LANGUAGE=DE_DE&WGSESSID=8df1140beae27dcfbd7984f57541521fdeutsch%20franzoesischer%20krieg&TABLIGHTBOX=RESULT&SEARCHMODE=NEW&SEARCHTXT1=deutsch%20franzoesischer%20krieg, Württemberg troops at the battle of Wörth, 6.08.1870; a detailed account of war paintings and war propaganda is given by Susanne Parth, *Zwischen Bildbericht und Bildpropaganda. Kriegskonstruktionen in der deutschen Militärmalerei des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2010).

¹⁵⁴ Volker Ackermann, Jörg Engelbrecht & Bernd-A. Rusinek (eds.), *Einführung in die Interpretation historischer Quellen. Schwerpunkt: Neuzeit* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1992), p. 61.

experiences were likely to be suppressed, the joyful ones seemed to prevail. So it came that many soldiers remembered most often their own heroic actions for which they had received the Iron Cross. The fact that the surviving soldiers were celebrated as heroes awoke patriotic feelings by which they easily got carried away.

The government and the media had a great role in the fostering of national sentiments. The proclamation of German unity had also functioned as a catalyst for a greater national belief; it provided the political basis for the troops' increasing pride of having participated in this historical event. Clearly, in the immediate aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, a common national identity had been constructed at least amongst the majority of the troops. Heroic accounts, initiatives by the media, the constant attempts of the government in encouraging national thinking during the war, and the establishment of war memorials for the fostering of collective memory had all played a major role in creating of a common sense of 'Germanness' as it can be identified in all German states.

CONCLUSION

The Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71 and the subsequent unification displayed key events in the study of the emergence of a common national identity in nineteenth-century Germany. Resulting in the creation of a German nation, these events represented to many contemporaries what can be considered the first real piece of a common German history. Despite the prevalence of region typical customs and traditions - coined by centuries of regionalism and the absence of mutual political institutions – a sublime mood was evident in the majority of German states and provinces in the months after the proclamation of the unification. This notion, which had been transmitted to the troops still located in the theatre of war via field post, newspapers and rumours, mingled with the soldiers' own wartime experiences and

attitudes. However, fragments of this infectious enthusiasm had been also identified in July 1870 through to the return of the German troops as ‘national heroes’. A reasonable evaluation of what soldiers had been particularly vulnerable to these external influences and how they developed national sentiments, before, during and after the war, derived from letters, diaries and correspondence cards and required an awareness of various factors.

Togetherness despite Regional Differences – Most of the regional traditions as they had been typical especially for Bavaria had been persistent until today and proved resilient in spite of several major conflicts Germany had been involved in. However, during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71, troops had been only limitedly able to practise them. Identity had been marked by the social structure as it was implemented in nineteenth-century German society. This class system had been carried into the war and remained entirely intact. So it came, that soldiers from the educated middle class and aristocracy, including high ranking officers and one-year volunteers, had been likely to make use of their status in order to gain certain privileges. In contrast, conscript soldiers, drawn from the lower classes, had traditionally obeyed to their superiors, as it had been the case in peacetime; this was particularly evident for Prussian troops who had been part of a long-standing military system which was based on a traditional hierarchical structures. If tensions between different contingents arose, they did so in connection with social structures and military traditions. It was particularly common for Prussian troops, featuring a military system with a long-standing history, to criticise Bavarian soldiers for their lacks in military education and training. Thus, prejudices had created certain negative reputations distinctive to Bavarian forces; the most commonly criticised feature displayed their inadequate marching speed.

Furthermore, regarding interactions and relations between troops of different regional origin, there was insufficient evidence to suggest that language had posed adamant barriers to the soldiers or that they had practiced any social or cultural activities which can be identified

as purely regional during the war. This was partly a result of wartime strains and insufficient amounts of material supplies; soldiers had to make do with very basic utensils. If soldiers had problems in communicating with each other and understanding the various German dialects, this was largely an issue of a lack of education rather than the product of cultural rejection. Here again, the level of education of the troops depended upon their social background and not subject to regional peculiarities. Social wartime activities such as the singing of songs and other artistic performances had been carried out by troops from all participating contingents alike and had a similar impact upon them: they were a welcome distraction to the strains the war had imposed and a motivation at the same time.

National Identity Strengthened by Nationalisation of the Enemy – In terms of national identity, it can be said that the two catalysts for greater national sentiments amongst German troops in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71, examined in the second chapter, had only partly succeeded. The mobilisation phase of July 1870, therefore, contributed to a type of war enthusiasm, involving certain groups of people in the whole of Germany; such a notion had not been experienced at any time before to a remotely similar extent. Although, this enthusiasm and euphoria had affected primarily young, educated men, its existence and infectious nature cannot be denied. In Prussia, evidence for this can be found in the high number of volunteers. Moreover, also in the Bavarian capital the mood at the outbreak of war had been of a positive nature. It became evident, though, that high enthusiasm had affected primarily the educated population in urban areas, providing officers and one-year volunteers for the war. Rural areas, where the vast majority of ordinary conscripted soldiers had been drawn from, had been largely unaffected by war euphoria. These men lacked the time to be concerned with great national sentiments for their worries lay with their families at home.

Similarly, the notion of entering a war against a common enemy had been present in the majority of German regiments and, as the war progressed, had aided the development of their

own identification with the German nation. Although, exceptions had existed, expressions about the French as the 'national' enemy can be found in accounts of high ranks *and* ordinary soldiers. The creation of a stereotypical enemy image included not only French soldiers, but it had gradually developed into a German struggle against the French nation and civilians. 'Uncivilised' and 'deceitful' actions and fighting methods of *Franc-tireurs* and *Turkos* further encouraged the existing German image of the French's illegitimate style of warfare. Thus, the nationalisation of the enemy provided reasons to German troops to identify Germany as the 'superior nation' and gave rise to the perception of the war as a 'national' one.

External Influences upon National Identity – The Franco-Prussian War was the first German war in which the press had played an increasing role in the development of national identity. Furthermore, the writing of memoirs became a popular activity amongst veterans in the immediate aftermath of the war to an extent never experienced at any time before in German history. The memories of war participants, independent from their activity and rank, displayed a reflection of their experiences; hence, memoirs still represent a personal source. However, the authors of memoirs were able to select the information they desired to include. Genuine wartime experiences had been transformed by several external influences; this became already evident during the war, but was most apparent in the aftermath. The depiction of the war as an overall positive event and the perception of having participated in the fight for a German nation had been common features of veterans' writings produced after 1871.

Influenced by their personal environment, the media and the government, the troops received a great deal of recognition when they returned from the war. This recognition displayed a positive experience, providing room for national sentiments and the feeling of having fought for a just cause overwhelmed actual wartime strains. The German soldiers, independent of rank, social status or regional origin, returned home as 'national heroes'. The soldiers' written accounts after the war did not reflect their real experiences; whereas sinister

experiences were likely to be suppressed, the joyful ones seemed to prevail. So it came that many soldiers remembered most often their own heroic actions for which most of them had received the Iron Cross. Thus, national patriotic sentiments, the identification with the German nation, had been evoked which obscured first-hand experiences.

The government and the media also played an increasing role in the fostering of national sentiments. It is evident that the proclamation of German unity had functioned as a catalyst for a greater national belief; it provided the political basis for the troops' increasing pride of having participated in this historical event. Clearly, in the immediate aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, a common national identity had been constructed at least amongst the majority of the troops. Heroic accounts, initiatives by the media, the constant attempts of the government in encouraging national thinking during the war, and the establishment of war memorials for the fostering of collective memory had all played a major role in creating of a common sense of 'Germanness' as it can be identified in the majority of German states.

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